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ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF T. S. ELIOT'S *THE WASTE LAND*

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MEJO, or the MELOW Journal of World Literature, is a double-blind, peer-refereed e-journal brought out annually by MELOW, the Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the World. It is a reincarnation of the previous publications brought out in a book or printed form by the Society since its inception in 1998.

MELOW is an academic organization, one of the foremost of its kind in India. The members are college and university teachers, scholars and critics interested in literature, particularly World Literature. The Organization meets every year at an international conference, and it seeks to maintain academic standards, encourages and grooms younger scholars, and provides a forum for senior scholars in literature.

The papers presented at MELOW conferences are screened, selected, edited and published by a Board of Editors especially appointed for the purpose. Whereas in the initial years, the Society favored a book publication, in recent years, it has a published journal annually. With the changing times, MELOW decided to move on to online publication. The result is *MEJO*.

This is the seventh volume of *MEJO,* the MELOW Journal. This issue contains essays from the 2022 conference held at International Centre, Goa, India. Additionally, MELOW also releases a Call for Papers on the same theme after the conference on various academic—research portals. Many scholars and professors worldwide send their papers for publication in our Journal. A panel of reviewers have selected the papers from the revised submissions.

We at MELOW wish you happy reading!

Editors

About MELOW

MELOW (The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the World) was first set up in 1998 as MELUS-India. It is an academic organization among the foremost of its kind in India. The members are college and university teachers, scholars and critics interested in literature, particularly in world literature and literature across borders of time and space. The organization meets every year at an international conference. It seeks to maintain academic standards, encourages younger scholars and provides a forum for senior scholars in literature.
The MELOW journal has existed in hard print for about a decade. The *Mejo journal* was revamped in 2016 and is now available online on the website.

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ISAAC SEQUEIRA MEMORIAL FUND

Professor Isaac Sequeira
(5 January 1930--7 September 2006)

Professor Isaac Sequeira from Hyderabad, who worked at Osmania University and was closely associated with the ASRC, Hyderabad, was a mentor and patron to several generations of academics in India. His sad demise in 2006 created a void hard to fill. We at MELOW wish to keep alive the memory of our Patron and guiding light, who played a key role in all the activities of our organisation.

We have set up an Isaac Sequeira Memorial Fund, out of which a **cash prize of Rs.5,000** is awarded for the **best paper presented at our conferences** (see details below).*

With effect from the 2010 conference, there is a Special Invited Lecture by a person of eminence funded by the **Isaac Sequeira Memorial Fund.**

Several individuals have come forward to offer contributions towards the corpus and donated generously to the **ISM fund. Donations of Rs.1,000** or more may be sent in **cash/by draft/NEFT** payable to MELOW at Chandigarh. For details contact melusmelow@gmail.com

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•In memory of Prof Isaac Sequeira, MELOW annually awards a prize for the best paper presented at its conference. The award comprises a certificate and a cash prize of Rs.5,000. •The competition is open to Indian citizens who are members of MELOW. The participant/delegate should be less than forty years of age at the time of the conference, follow the stipulated deadlines and submit the abstract and complete paper before it is presented at the conference.

• The Office Bearers of MELOW appoint a panel of Judges.

•If required, these rules may be amended by a simple majority of members present and voting at the Conference.

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Presidential Address, MELOW Conference 2022

Many People, Many Tongues: The Plurality of Perspectives in *The Waste Land*

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Abstract: This essay focuses on the inbuilt contradictions in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, which straddles an uncertain territory between the public and the private. There are many voices that can be heard in the poem, and the voice of the poet himself—despite his insistence on impersonality—may be discerned as an undercurrent. In the initial years following the publication of *The Waste Land*, the private voice was not dominant, but, as Russian formalists tell us, the dominant element in the text shifts and moves, giving way to the subordinate elements. Thus, *The Waste Land* now presents multiple faces to the reader, many of them linked with Eliot's private experiences. This paper highlights some of these personal references that the poet tried to keep out of the public eye.

The year was 1922, and humanity was still reeling under the impact of the first World War. The world still lay in shambles, broken and fragmented. All nations' economies were destroyed, and leaders were looking for ways and means to return to some semblance of normalcy. Those who survived were grappling with issues in their personal lives and with their damaged psychological states. In London, a tense T.S. Eliot, having returned from his convalescence in a rehab centre in Switzerland, was still recovering from his nervous breakdown, still wrestling with matters related to the eccentricities of a brilliant but highly-strung starlet wife, and at the same time, waiting for his next poetic collection to hit the literary world.

Hit the world; it did! T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* was published by Faber in 1922, and the literary landscape was never the same again, for the long poem—with a battery of

notes appended to it—was nothing like the poetry that readers were familiar with. It did not have conventional structure or rhyme schemes; no daffodils were swaying in the breeze, no knights on lonely moors, no counterpart of Maud Gonne in its dedication, no love poetry, no Victorian pessimism, no optimism either, *no vers de societe*', no lyricism, in fact, nothing that could relate it to the preceding generations of poets or their verses.

Some critics hailed it as a masterpiece that spoke for a generation of lost souls, while others denounced it for its allusiveness. Take, for example, F.L. Lucas, who had no patience with the modernist movement, published a review of T.S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land*, in *The New Statesman* in November 1923 and clearly stated the difference between real poets, and 'bookworms' like Eliot, like "maggots which breed in the corruption of literature." Lucas reflects that 'to attempt here an interpretation, even an intelligible summary of the poem, is to risk making oneself ridiculous: "the borrowed jewels he has set in its head do not make Mr. Eliot's toad more prepossessing," he said, convinced that an actual poem should not need notes and annotations.

This man is doing strange funny things to poetry: this was the general opinion. The early reviews of *The Waste Land* did nothing to lift Eliot out of his depression until his *miglior fabro*, Ezra Pound appeared on the scene as a literary dictator. He endorsed his work with an authority that none dare refute: "Eliot's *Waste Land* is I think the justification of the 'movement,' of our modern experiment, since 1900," he wrote shortly after the poem was published in 1922. Cleanth Brooks described *The Waste Land* as a "highly condensed epic of the modern age."

What most perplexed the readers was what we now call the intertextuality of the poem, the hundreds of references to other writers, thinkers, and critics from the world over. A great poet, according to Eliot, must have a broad horizon and be familiar with "the mind of Europe," as he said in 1919. However, in *The Waste Land*, it is not just the mind of Europe that the

reader encounters but snippets from across time and space, quotations that cut across chronotopic borders and are woven into the texture of the poem, from the world of Sappho in the 6th century BC and the *Vedic* age to the modern times with the polluted Thames flowing sadly through the city of London where sleazy encounters take place all the time. With all these allusions and references, some readers dismissed the poem as a scrap heap of quotations hastily put together in five uneven cantos, masquerading as poetry.

Adding to the confusion was Eliot's note on the characters we encounter in the poem: "Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem." The impression given to the reader is that here is a stage that is peopled by a motley crowd comprising men and women, young and old, real and surreal, going round and round in a circle, or as in a merry-go-round, rising and falling from time to time. As we are aware, the circulatory motion, the spiral staircase, and the wheel are recurrent symbols in Eliot's poetry. The long poem seems to revolve around them.

When we look at Eliot's note on the voices of the poem, what he leaves out—perhaps deliberately—is the voice of the poet himself: his voice, "infinitely gentle. Infinitely suffering," to quote from "The Preludes." This infinitely gentle and suffering voice is deliberately muted by the poet who believed in the theory of impersonality, who insisted time and again that the poet has no personality and that the poem needs to speak for itself. The question often asked is: why did the bard protest so much? What was he afraid of exposing? What did he wish to hide? Which aspect of his personal life or personality did he wish to keep from the public eye? Over the last one hundred years these questions have been tackled many times by critics and scholars.

Different viewpoints have been presented and overall, they have served to turn topsy-turvy the notion of the impersonality of the poet that had never really convinced the discerning reader. The “voices” of the poem that Eliot draws our attention to mingle time and again with the angst of the poet himself and connect with episodes from his personal life that he wanted to keep out of sight. Each voice presents a different perspective, and each presents a facet of the personality of the poet who was a self-professed "classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and Anglo-Catholic in religion."

While on the many voices and perspectives in the poem, it may be rewarding to pause and take a look at the idea of polyphony and polyglossia in Russian formalism. As Mikhail Bakhtin pointed out, there is always an interplay of many voices in a text. What we hear may not be the voice that the writer wished to prioritise; *au contraire*, it may be the one that he/she wished not to reveal. So it is in *The Waste Land* where the speaking voice that sounds loud and clear may be that of Tiresias, perhaps, or of Mrs Sosostris, or the Fisher King, but faintly below the surface lies the voice of the poet, a broken man still trying to gather himself and shore his fragments together against the ruins. This almost unheard voice presents the perspective of the creator who has seen all and suffered all, like Tiresias. In fact, he is Tiresias, the blind old man with wrinkled dugs, a fact that is endorsed in his personal letters where he occasionally signed himself as T. or Tiresias (Eliot papers at the Houghton Library, Harvard University).

Through Eliot’s personal letters to Ezra Pound much information may be gathered on the poems and what lies between their lines. Eeldrop and Appleplex were the names that Eliot and Pound used playfully in their written exchanges. The correspondence between the two lays bare valuable information on the composition and structure of *The Waste Land* and also on the more profound meaning beneath the apparent waste and aridity of projected landscape the characters who inhabit it.

Each of the numerous characters of the poem gives us a different perspective on the main theme of the poem which relates to the spiritual wasteland of the modern man. Each voice we hear is a commentary on a world torn by greed, lust, and avarice. Some of the voices of the poem were unheard in the initial years, suppressed as they were by the literary dictatorship of Ezra Pound and Eliot's harping on the impersonality of his poems. However, with the passage of time, these voices have been allowed to emerge and the readers have duly recognised them. What Roman Jakobson says about the dominant and shifting voices may well be applied here: that in any given text there are dominant voices that are loud and clear, but at the same time there are other voices that may emerge at a given time:

> In the evolution of poetic form it is…a question of the shifting dominant, within a given complex of poetic norms…elements which were originally secondary become primary…The hierarchy of artistic devices changes within the framework of a given poetic genre. (Jakobson 182-87)

Alternatively, the dominant voice the reader hears may not necessarily be the one the writer wished to focus on. The muted voices, or the silences of the text that Pierre Macherey spoke of, become audible when the audience is receptive. What is not heard or said in a text, or the silent spaces and absences of the text, are as important as that which is obvious and heard (Macherey).

By contradicting his impersonality theory, Eliot himself described the poem as "the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life…just a piece of rhythmical grumbling." He referred to the many personal experiences of a writer that go into the making of a text, the tunes we whistle, the ditties we hear in childhood, etc:

> …the song of one bird, the leap of one fish, at a particular place and time, the scent of one flower, an old woman on a German mountain path, six ruffians playing cards at night at a small railway junction…they come to represent

> depths of feeling into which we cannot peer. (*The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* 141)

So, evidently, what we have in *The Waste Land* is a poem that teeters on an uncertain terrain that is part private and part public. It owes its unique character to the poet's familiarity with the repertoire of world literature and at the same time the agony of his personal experience that gave birth to the creation. The personal experience, the anguish and pain that the poet went through, was not entirely the result of his unhappy first marriage; a major loss partly caused it that the poet suffered. I refer to the 1952 essay by John Peter who saw a hidden figure in the carpet of the poem and shocked the literary world with what Frank Kermode called the "homosexual interpretation of *The Waste Land*," comparing it with Tennyson's In Memoriam, delving deep into the warm relationship that Eliot as a young man had with a fellow boarder with whom he also spent some time in Paris. This young man, Jean Verdenal, to whom he dedicated his Prufrock and other Poems, was killed in the first world war and—as Peter's essay put it—Eliot could not come to terms with this loss: his "irrational response to it was his hasty and disastrous marriage to Vivienne," according to James E. Miller. This may explain the frequent references to "these April sunsets, that somehow recall. My buried life, and Paris in the spring" in Eliot's work:

> I am willing to admit that my own single memory—touched by a sentimental sunset, the memory of a friend across the Luxembourg Gardens in the late afternoon, waving a branch of lilac, a friend who was later (so far as I could find out) to be mixed with the mud of Gallipoli. (qtd. in Miller)

His dear friend, Jean Verdenal, 1889–1915, mort aux Dardanelles (dedication to *Prufrock and other Observations*) lost "in the mud of Gallipoli" seems to lurk behind Phlebas the Phoenician, drowned and unable to come back to life again. "Look, those are pearls that were his eyes…" (*The Waste Land* 48).

Related to this attachment to the young man is Eliot's inability to forge a satisfying relationship with women in his personal life, and his frequent portrayal of men and women unable to communicate with each other in the sterile waste of the modern times. All these point towards the fact that, like J. Alfred Prufrock, the protagonist of the "Portrait of a Lady," the speaker in the Hyacinth garden, and the companion of the lady with bad nerves in "A Game of Chess," the creator of these characters inserted a part of himself into these characters. Their voices echo his own thoughts, painful and disjointed:

> My nerves are bad to−night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
>
> Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak.
>
> What are you thinking of? What thinking?
>
> What?
>
> I never know what you are thinking. Think."
>
> I think we are in rats' alley
>
> Where the dead men lost their bones.

At the same time, the voice of Vivienne Haighwood, his first wife, is also heard through a comment—written in her own handwriting in the facsimile of *The Waste Land*—that reads "why do you get married if you don't want children?" and again in the lines "My nerves are bad tonight, yes bad…" we are reminded of Vivienne's personal ailment, that she had a "history of nerves" that contributed much to Eliot's depression. After T.S. Eliot walked out on her, Vivenne was later confined to an asylum where she spent her final years. So much for the "impersonal" nature of the poem that Eliot wanted his readers to believe in. One may understand why the poet did not wish to share his traumas with the world. Nevertheless, despite his efforts, the personal that crept into his poem was discovered and we, as readers and critics, agree that there is more in the poem than Eliot wanted us to see.

In the "unreal city" section it is again the voice of the poet we hear. Eliot, we are told, used to walk down London Bridge to his office daily, seeing the people around him "with their eyes fixed on their feet," hearing the bells of the church ring as he passed by, noting the "hollow sound" on the final stroke. Again, Eliot himself was accosted by the "Smyrna merchant" called Mr Eugenides in the poem, invited to the Metropole, a Hotel popular with a specific section of society, infamous for its same-sex revelries.

Other than the "personal" voice of the poet, or that of Tiresias, there are other voices that rise and fall as one traverses Eliot's Waste Land. The voice of the poet as Tiresias is stately and dignified, sadly commenting on what he "sees" through the legendary character's unseeing eyes. Similarly, in the allusions to Augustine, Dante, or Baudelaire, to the Satyricon, or the Bible, the narratorial voice is that of a detached observer, commenting on scenes and situations that need to be addressed. These sombre voices form the commentary that weaves in and out of the various episodes of the poem, linking them together. We have been told that *The Waste Land* was composed in bits and pieces over a lengthened period: Eliot had been collecting scenes and situations that he saw and observed in and around London. These scenes were then linked together by a commentary in a voice supposedly that of Tiresias, mingling with other voices, in actuality expressing the thoughts and feelings of the poet himself. The poet as the silent spectator sees all and is pained by what he sees. If only the rot could be redeemed!

The serious voices, then, belong to the poet. However, most of the other voices that we hear are from a different socio-cultural milieu: they emerge from the lower classes, the under-privileged or exploited sections of society, from the sleazy underbelly of a superficially glitzy world, or from the nouveau riche class on whom "assurance sits like a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire," or the get-rich-quick variety with a pocketful of currants, or the aristocratic classes who read much of the night and go south in winter—the fashionable,

touristy travels of the privileged class. Beginning with the first Canto, "Burial of the Dead," we have Countess Marie Larisch who recounts her experience with an arch-duke cousin, and the Hyacinth girl who laments "You gave me hyacinths first a year ago/they called me the hyacinth girl." Following almost at their heels is Mme Sosostris with her wicked pack of cards. So, in the very first section these are at least three different takes on the modern waste land: the socialites who must compulsively travel whenever the season changes, the girl in tears because she no longer receives hyacinths from her lover, and the crafty woman engaged in some underhand dealing, trying to dodge the police. There are other voices, too, like those from Richard Wagner's opera, Dante's Inferno, or Baudelaire's beloved Paris, or from anthropological studies of Jessie Weston or James Frazer. They all mingle, the plebeian, the sedate, and the stentorian, the timid and the assertive, and make the poem the collage it that it is. In the following sections, Eliot employs the diction of the working class. Servants, maids, and the way they talk.

Speaking of the "popular" voices of the text, it is essential to mention how Eliot uses nursery rhymes and popular music to parody the current situation. From time to time, Eliot turned to popular nursery rhymes. The "Mulberry bush" use in "The Hollow Men" is the most obvious example. In *The Waste Land,* too, in the final section, London Bridge is falling down, falling down because of the teeming millions of inhabitants of *The Waste Land* who walk over it daily, with their eyes fixed before their feet. Here, too, while referring to the nursery rhyme, what Eliot leaves unsaid – the silent spaces of the text – is of importance. In the children's song there is "my fair lady" who may be able to build the bridge again. In *The Waste Land* the fair lady is not invoked. It is only in a later text, "Ash-Wednesday," that Eliot brings in the Lady in the white gown, "blessed sister, holy mother," who may redeem the world.

There are other references to popular songs, too. "O-o-o that Shakespeherian Rag," for instance: note, it is not Shakespearean but Shakespeherian, in keeping with the syncopated

rhythm of the jazz music popular in Eliot's time, in particular referring to a hit tune by Gene Buck and Herman Ruby in 1912. Moreover, the reference to Mme Sosostris and Mrs Porter, both evidently ladies "of situation," the former indulging in something underhand, the latter – borrowed from "The Ballad of Red Wing," an Australian song that soldiers sang when they landed at Gallipoli – in prostitution and immorality. Then there is Sweeney, who comes to meet the madame: he is the dubious character fleshed out later in Sweeney Agonistes, modelled on the notorious barber who would murder his clients and bake them into pies.

Much of "A Game of Chess" with its crude, earthy, down-to-earth straight talk of the lower section of society, is inspired by conversations that Eliot gathered from Ellen Kellond, the maid who served the Eliots. This is the lower strata of society which also includes the daughters of the Thames who have been compromised in depressing circumstances in "A Fire Sermon": helpless young women from the lower strata exploited by nouveau riche young men, the "loitering heirs of city directors" who have now departed, leaving no addresses.

All these voices merge with the voice of Tiresias which in turn blends with that of the poet who, keeping in mind the Inferno visualised by Dante, creates a living hell of his own when he sees the world breaking up into smithereens amid a cacophony of voices that flounder and flail from time to time, drawing attention to the fact that we are all living a death in life, in a world that is more living than dead, a barren, stretch where there is no rainfall, and over which the dry tree gives no shelter and the inexorable heat of the sun reduces everything to one big heap of stony rubbish, the irredeemable, all pervasive waste land which can only be redeemed if we set our lands in order, and if we give, sympathise, and control, to arrive at *Shanti Shanti Shanti*, the peace that passeth understanding.

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Isaac Sequeira Memorial Lecture

Shoring Fragments of *The Waste Land* Centennial

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Most centennials are observed, celebrated, or passed off in quiet. A grim solemnity attends the first, fanfare and fun, the second; indifference, even repugnance, marks the third. At 100, books are no different from our old teachers. We grow old with them. Very few of them are gratefully remembered still with awe and affection; most, clean forgotten having known them once; and those few we manage to remember now and then, often unhappily, are forgiven. *The Waste Land* joins a few classics students of English prefer to landmark alongside Joyce's Ulysses that inspired it in some ways. And among the less-read equals in long shelf-life are Woolf's Jacob's Room, Lawrence's Fantasia of the Unconscious and Aaron's Road, Cummings' Enormous Room, Mansfield's Garden Party and Other Stories, and Yeats's Later Poems. Academics who sharpen their pencils in anticipation of centennials are not sure they have anything new to say about this book or that. However regretful they have reached a point of negligible returns; they still feel free to marvel at the work's continued appeal to new generations of readers. Moreover, that "appeal," rather than the work, calls for a reasonable defence. Since the readers of Eliot's poetry were, and still are, in an imaginary classroom, they understand. ("Critically Eliot returned us to the classroom," rued William Carlos Williams in his Autobiography when he had first read *The Waste Land*) (174). The poem's marmoreal image has given the classroomers a phrase they fondly recall: "memory and desire" (l.3)[1] Mixed in due proportion; they still hope to generate new centennial readings.

What It Means to Understand

I shall begin with two less-known passages from Eliot's prose that suggest what understanding modern poetry enjoins in its readers. (It is more than likely that *The Waste Land* was at the back of the poet's mind whenever he talked of meaning and understanding.) The first is from Eliot's letter to Virginia Woolf in 1930. The second is from his Preface to A Little Book of Modern Verse, chosen by Anne Ridler in 1942.

> I think that perhaps the chief result and reason for re-reading a thing many times is not that one gets to understand it better but merely that one gets used to it— that is, understanding a thing chiefly means that one no longer bothers about the supposed need for understanding it. (Letters V 229)
>
> [T]o understands the [modern] poet, we should have, in fact, to reach a degree of self-consciousness of which mankind has never been capable, and of which, if attained, it might perish. (Eliot "Preface" 8)

It is clear from such observations that Eliot did not equate our usual levels and kinds of understanding with the modern poet's because, as his early essays leading to *The Waste Land* and those that follow its publication, such as The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism suggest, one's "understanding," such as it is, is always contingent on one's reading habits. In other words, we manage to understand the most complex things and people only because we meet them so often and eventually get used to them. It is only natural, however that the fear of being misunderstood haunts all poets. The classics whose centennials we convene in homage to their writers run this risk most of all. Perhaps the centennials make for new ways of misunderstanding the classics we seem to understand so well. For all the refinements poets seek in language, the world poses newer challenges for those who insist that they understand everything about its lyric black holes. To such readers, Eliot once remarked that "It is a test … that genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood" (*Selected Prose* 206).

The Making and Unmaking of Readers

Instead of asking what we lost in the tumult of the centennial, it may be worth asking what we still have of *The Waste Land.* A fair answer would be: many more texts of the poem since its first publication in 1922 that incrementally swelled our physical shelves and virtual folders, besides many more of our memories of poring over the apparatus for reading *The Waste Land*. Meanwhile, the poet of *The Waste Land* had, like W. H. Auden's Freud, become "a whole climate of opinion," to the making of which those papers still contributed.

At 50, *The Waste Land* continued to intrigue readers differently. Very close to the poem's half-century, in 1971, *A Facsimile & Transcript of the Original Drafts* of the poem appeared. The question that remained at the time was: What really is/was *The Waste Land*? Was that a poem Eliot wrote? Was it a poem written by the Other Eliot under psychiatric care, or did one of the co-opted authorial selves become one as Eliot-Pound? Alternatively, one vetted by a specially elected committee of Eliot's first readers, including Vivien Eliot, or the editors who fine-comb submissions in publishing houses, or redactors among the poet's personal correspondents, publishing agents, or student researchers and textual scholars, source-hunting sleuths, and not to speak of a whole army of annotators, explicators, and commentators; critical schools and their sponsors; compilers, anthologists, translators .... Never before in the English poetic tradition had a poem's scene of writing become more alluring for interpretive forays than the poem itself. So relentlessly dissected and critiqued for its faults of commission and omission, or those fancied to have been committed in its composition and dissemination, the poem's death was kept away by live discussions. Long before we got used to Michel Foucault's "author function" rather than the Author, the Eliot critics intuited what that function eerily entailed. Nearly everything in and about *The Waste Land*, including Eliot's Notes, added since its first publication in *The Criterion* and *The Dial*, received urgent critical attention. If Cleanth Brooks and Austin Warren's *Understanding*

Poetry (1936) had not showcased *The Waste Land* as its prize catch, the copyright fees might have proved quite forbidding to the publisher.[2]

Where (we ask, pace Choruses from 'The Rock-1934) is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge, and where the knowledge we have lost in information? The memories of the good old Waste Land are now randomly lodged in our subconscious while the conscious mind forages among: the young poet's notebook from 1909 to 1917 edited and annotated by Christopher Ricks in Inventions of the March Hare (1996); the epistolary progress of the poem's se(le)ctions still "doing many voices" and seeking a cohesive title; Lawrence Rainey's collations of literally hundreds of papers and notes, letters, student papers, twenty-odd fragments between 1913 and 1922, all meticulously arrayed in the notes to his two books *Revisiting The Waste Land* and The Annotated Waste Land, simultaneously appearing in 2005. Many older readers of the poem might own copies of Ricks and both books by Rainey, but still would gladly return to their favourite Faber redactions of the good old 1960s. My copy, its pencilled margins intricately filled with cross-references, ripostes, naïve quotes and queries, still tells me under what cloud of unknowing I had then read the poem, or what hints and guesses conducted me through "the cunning passages and the contrived corridors" of critical studies at the time. What "original" was transcribed as what "copy" by Eliot, what master-copy was later enslaved to make for the press, in which hand or by using what typewriter, etc. was big meat for speculation by critics all through the1970s, all of them unmindful however of the poet's "Son of man/ You cannot say, or guess" (ll: 20-21) reminder. The story of *The Waste Land* thus meanders along itinerant narratives of documentary evolution and series of publications but the thing that still troubles most readers is the poem's (also, the poet's) ontological insecurities and instabilities. It seems, so much depended upon Eliot's resolutions of aim and effect. For the most brilliant Anglo-American readers, it seemed, such things mattered rather than what the poem as a whole was supposed to mean.

If we allow for a moment that *The Waste Land* was a text that anticipated the great paradigm shifts that we generally attribute to poststructuralist theory, then we shall see how Eliot's poem fell first into the interpretive hands of New Critics, "close readers" closest to the manner born. Nevertheless, what they preferred reading (the poem, form, language, signifier …) to those other things that mattered to a new generation of readers (the poet, content, intention, signified …) made all the difference. In short, the new readers were very careful that their "close reading" did not end up as closed reading. They certainly enjoyed their reading at a distance. Moreover, they quickly and wisely realized that the world would not make sense at once, but would rather make sense slowly, in time, when their reading opens up rather than closes down passages for the traffic of returns and recovery. Give. Sympathise. Control. Collateral damages were many, but the sheer munificence and camaraderie of Eliot's well-wishers helped *The Waste Land* from dying at birth. Further, the postnatal hermeneutical support and incubated exegetical care it received at the hands of a devoted cohort of critics and teachers the world over not only saved it from oblivion but helped it grow older, unencumbered since by minor threats and casualties, and now reach a centenarian's great day. But for the solid materiality of its mountainous scholarship of hundred years, where would *The Waste Land* be? Save a few truly perceptive and insightful studies that have transformed our ways of reading so much that we sometimes forget what it was like to read Eliot otherwise, much of what we read as "stories" of scholarship lose something in the telling. On the occasion of *The Waste Land* centennial, therefore, we may be forgiven if we are not sure what we think we are celebrating— its life, or afterlife?

The Waste Land in a Culturally-Different Classroom

What works and what does not in culturally-different classrooms when *The Waste Land* is read is unpredictable. Much, I believe, depends on what students recall, mostly upon a teacher's prompt. When, for example, regarding the "Murmur of maternal lamentation" (l:

367), Grover Smith alerts us to "The women weeping for Christ and women weeping for Tammuz" (94), and Harold Fisch hears "Rachel weeping for her children in chapter 31 of Jeremiah" (139), I seem to hear more resonantly Gāndhāri's cries and curses of *Stree Parva* of the *Mahabharata*. Doesn't she almost lament, looking at her slain sons, "I had not thought death had undone so many" [1] ? (63) Certainly, to what echoic parallels a reader responds, and to what other allusive lengths they do not, is contingent on a widely rich cultural memory Eliot assumes his readers to have.

What I have found unmistakable however is Eliot's indebtedness to the Ṛishyaćriṅga legend of *Vana Parva* of the *Mahabharata*, not least because that young adult reminds me of the Hyacinth Garden of "The Burial of the Dead." Eliot's Boy recalls that the Hyacinth Girl's "arms were full, and [her] hair wet, [she] could not/ Speak …" (ll: 38-39). The poet's direct source is evidently Jessie Weston. She retells the Indian legend in *From Ritual to Romance*, observing why freeing the waters is a theme central to "the old story-telling formula" of the Aryan race in general (25):

> [In the *Mahabharata*] we find a young Brahmin brought up by his father, Vibhāṇḍaka, in a lonely forest hermitage absolutely ignorant of the outside world, and even of the very existence of beings other than his father and himself. He has never seen a woman, and does not know that such a creature exists.
>
> A drought falls upon a neighbouring kingdom, and the inhabitants are reduced to great straits for lack of food. The King, seeking to know by what means the sufferings of his people may be relieved, learns that so long as Ṛishyaćriṅga continues chaste so long will the drought endure. An old woman, who has a fair daughter of irregular life, undertakes the seduction of the hero. The King has a ship, or raft (both versions are given), fitted out with

> all possible luxury, and an apparent Hermit's cell erected upon it. The old woman, her daughter and companions embark; and the river carries them to a point not far from the young Brahmin's hermitage.
>
> Taking advantage of the absence of his father, the girl visits Ṛishyaćṛiṅga in his forest cell, giving him to understand that she is a Hermit, like himself, which the boy, in his innocence, believes. He is so fascinated by her appearance and caresses that, on her leaving him, he, deep in thought of the lovely visitor, forgets, for the first time, his religious duties.
>
> On his father's return he innocently relates what has happened, and the father warns him that fiends in this fair disguise strive to tempt hermits to their undoing. The next time the father is absent the temptress, watching her opportunity, returns, and persuades the boy to accompany het to her 'Hermitage' which she assures him is far more beautiful than his own. So soon as Ṛishyaćṛiṅga is safely on board the ship sails, the lad is carried to the capital of the rainless land, the King gives him his daughter as wife, and so soon as marriage is consummated the spell is broken, and rain falls to abundance. (30-31)

While Weston cites this *Mahabharata* episode in order to point up details from the Percival/Grail legend for comparison, my students now begin to see its crucial significance for Eliot's narrative. Few western commentaries draw upon Weston's "Freeing of the Waters" chapter (25-33) as holding the sure key to some of the blocked streams and rivulets of Eliot's fragments. All stagnant and frozen as puddles in large stony terrains, this narrative stream waits to be set free as it were. The metaphors of stilled or muddied water bodies are plentiful in *The Waste Land*. And we always sense someone as witnessing around riverine precincts, hearing, or overhearing music creeping by them (as in l. 257); or someone longing for the rain,

or being prodded by yet another voice musing by slow-moving streams. For a quick sampling: "for you know only/ [a place where you see] the dry stone [and hear] no sound of water" (ll: 21, 24); "Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song" (l: 176); "By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept …/Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,/Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song, for I speak not loud or long " (ll: 182-184); "While I was fishing in a dull canal" (l: 189); " 'This music crept by me upon the waters' " (l: 257); "The river sweats/ Oil and tar" (ll: 266-267); "The brisk swell/Rippled both shores" (ll: 284-285); " …the deep sea swell" (l: 313); "A current under the sea" (l: 315); "Entering the whirlpool" (318). And finally, in the opening movement of "What the Thunder Said," beginning line 331 ("Here is no water but only rock"), we hear a chorus's subjunctive thoughts on water and thirst:

> Here is no water but only rock
>
> Rock and no water
>
> …
>
> But there is no water. (ll: 331- 358)

At all such crucial junctures, readers sense a narrative overture. A story is about to begin, but it stops short or gets deflected. When the voices chant long litanies for redemptive grace, it is suggestive that they long for life by water, some irrigational facility, and potential fertility while traversing dry, rocky ground. The songs of the Thames-daughters rhyme with those of the Rhine-daughters to which Eliot's Note # 266 aligns them. The integration of such narrative fragments (shoring them against ruins, so to speak) is predicated upon the freeing of waters leading to fertility and new life, and redemption for those abandoned on the banks of canals and ditches along the city.

The Mythical Pedagogics

For Indian students somewhat familiar with the popular legends of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, the allusive trail of *freeing the waters* will certainly have yet another

significance. Whether Eliot alludes to the legend of Bhagīratha as well is moot but some of its crucial details will nonetheless provoke thought when we consider the arrested if blocked narrative flow of the poem. Bhagīratha's Herculean yogic effort brought down the recalcitrant Ganga ("sunken" as the poet qualifies it at line 395) so that he could perform the funerary rites for his Sāgara ancestral clan. A detail often missed in this legend is Ganga's own rather conceited thought that no force on earth would be able to withstand her massive downward rush and sweep from such celestial heights, but Śiva volunteers to receive and dam Ganga on his head. (Now the narrative turn at this point is quite revealing.) The mighty god not only withstands the immense pressure of the free-sliding Ganga but has her massive flow blocked and contained in just two locks of his matted hair. Gangādhara (Śiva) now plays with this sunken river that suffers the ignominy of circulating within Śiva's matted locks, meandering in circles. Freeing the waters is now Śiva's privilege. Bhagīratha prays to the Lord to set Ganga free. The sunken Ganga is so released and the parched earth gratefully receives her. Fertility restored, Bhagīratha commences his dharmic austerities. Here again, Eliot's method is one that recalls a narrative of gifts denied or declined for once but eventually freed and generously shared, a thought informing his reflection in the lines, "The awful daring of a moment's surrender/ Which an age of prudence can never retract" (ll: 404- 405).

Faint though his resemblance may be to the drowned sailor of Part V, Bhagīratha, like Phlebas the Phoenician, was once just as worldly and materialistic. Water purifies Phlebas, who forgets "the cry of gulls and the deep sea swell/ And the profit and loss" (ll: 313-314). As he enters the whirlpool" having "passed the stages of his age and youth" (ll:318-317), he is chastened like Bhagīratha who begins his renewed life of severe austerities. For this reason, I do not read this section called "Death by Water" as elegizing a drowner's sea-change. In the esoteric rendering of this legend in *Vasiṣṭarāmāyaṇa,* we meet the young Bhagīratha who asks his guru how he could end suffering, overcome the fear of old age and death, and how to fight

worldly delusion. His guru gives him much the same Vedantic counsel that Eliot has never felt tired of repeating in all his major poetry, beginning with *The Waste Land*. Renunciation, in short; "A condition of complete simplicity" which the poet's conclusion to the *Four Quartets* qualifies parenthetically as: "Costing not less than everything…," ("Little Gidding" l: 256). Bhagīratha duly embraces renunciation by even giving up his kingdom for peace (*ātmaśāntih*). Consider, then, Bhagīratha, who was once handsome and tall as you.

What Have We Given?

That nobody but T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound could have got away with the muddle of a poem like *The Waste Land*, by shoring fragments to make them look like a poet's work the way they consequently did, is also now a fact of English literary history of one hundred years. When we look at this poem part by part, we are struck by the many things that would still challenge our comprehension: chiefly, its dense allusiveness and narrative incoherence, its incompatible but contrapuntal effects that take long to register, and its stunted personae rather than full-fledged "characters," and the poet's added-on glosses. Not to speak of the annoyance we feel when we do not quite "see" the voices as we hear them; like the couple as they speak: "'My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me. /Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak'" (ll: 111-112). Where is the stage, and where the off-stage from where such voices come?[3] The poem's occasionally simplistic, stark, and reductive representation of stereotypes (typecasting a typist most of all!) are pretty much like those Prufrockian shadows who just come and go. These pathetic figures of a passing show draw no more than a melancholic remark or a whining aside each time from a voice that rarely speaks its name or provenance like Tiresias. (And if, for once, Tiresias sees, as Eliot avers he does in his "Notes," we are not sure that he "sees" the way we do.) The poem's quasi-dramatic passages are a serial tableaux arresting rather than moving a narrative through by providing a visual or auditory impetus. *The Waste Land* is by far the only poem in English that holds back more than it gives, or gives

away, and preaches gift as a prime, supreme virtue in life. Eliot's allusive pertinacity is often his readers' despair. What, indeed, has he given? Probably the great lesson his followers today learn most of all about language as a simulating device.

It has sometimes seemed to many teachers however that probably these very serious "problems" have certain advantages for their classrooms.[4] Where diehard teacher-interpreters among us have completely drawn a blank, the less determined and relaxed instructors have seen the way the fragments work, or do not. This is no small recognition. That "you cannot say or guess" grants an advance bail for our minor explicatory faults of commission and omission. For, when a student-narrative meets a Master-Narrative to argue a new case for *The Waste Land,* who will demur? All said and done, one's own reading, however inadequate, will meet some level of understanding a "Fire Sermon," and what happens "At the violet hour, when the eyes and back/ Turn upward from the desk …" (ll: 215-216). I have not seen a student paper offering anything so drastically different from a Northrop Frye's or a Helen Vendler's reading of the Clerk-Typist scene. And if my students ever do better than a critic, and indeed surprise me by their "misreading," I grant them the liberty to understand differently, which I take to be the prime objective of any respectable interpretation. And *The Waste Land* is by far the first English poem that declares the vanity of all interpretive vanities by letting one interpreter do no better that their forerunners.

My worry begins however not when young readers in my sessions respond, but when they do not. Reader responses are easy to theorise. Gaps are there to fill, and the more narrative gaps one spots there to fill, the better for the complacent reader. But I wonder what fancies curl around *The Waste Land* images and cling, and what may the notion of a reader as an infinitely gentle, infinitely suffering thing, suggest. I have seen a whole group of students sometimes remain untouched by any rasa these fragments evoke in them. When Conrad Aiken once suggested to Eliot that *The Waste Land* reminded him of Robert Burton's *Anatomy of*

Melancholy, a book infamous for chronicling unrelieved depression and existential boredom, the young poet is said to have pulled a long face. Students love to relate to texts that embody and convey the dominant rasa they project through the action and suffering of its characters. *The Waste Land*, alas, is no such poem.[5]

Sometimes this peculiarly distressing situation has prompted my reflections on the still-unassimilable Waste Land in our classrooms. Set against the familiar Author/Text/Reader, where will the Teacher figure in a triangular paradigm of recalcitrant reception? (I recall the Prufrockian grouse: "I have heard the mermaids [read western scholars] singing each to each. / I do not think that they will sing to me.") Is there a theory in the world of critical traditions that redeems young readers' complete indifference to imperious totalizing aesthetic claims? It is not always easy for Indian students of English to adopt and comply with the protocols of grim reading to which modernist classics and the canon have inured, by and large, their western counterparts. It is arguable with appropriate examples from *The Waste Land* that an average Indian teacher's pedagogic options or resources will evoke no *rasa* (in the exalted sense of aesthetic enjoyment or pleasure) in their students.

When students do not respond to Eliot's polyphonic and wide-ranging allusions, I still sense somehow a confused and confusing *rasa-dhwani* at work. They discover perhaps that *bībhatsa* works well with aborted narratives and tantalising glimpses of inhumane abuse.[6] The "abject" and the uncanny evoke extreme emotions of loathing in young minds, a sure test that they do respond but not quite the way textbooks allow. Quite puzzlingly for them, *The Waste Land* ends with *shāntih*, mocking the putative *śānta rasa*. Eliot would seem to suggest, perhaps ironically, that even the antithesis of rasa is not to be spurned as anything inconsequential. Is he not perhaps saying that only those who have rasa of some kind know what it is to want to get away from it? What else do the poem's raucously disgusting episodes of violence and mayhem suggest? I have since then called it *virasa* (in my feeble translation,

a blend of acedia and existential boredom) that poems like *The Waste Land*, some parts of fiction like Joyce's or Woolf's, or Gertrude Stein's, or drama like Beckett's or Pinter's, evoke. I would even suggest that it may just as well be possible for some teacher to examine *The Waste Land* samples of *virasa* while teaching it. The unrelieved boredom of having to list and comment on western civilization and its discontents is among the safest predictable exam questions on *The Waste Land*. That, indeed, we might call another banality of evil. *Virasa* is a *rasa*. We all know it when we suffer it, but no tradition would consider it "aesthetic" enough to theorise it. Virasa even militates against the senses of soothing comfort and lasting pleasure elite theories of art canvass in ancient cultures.

The Piece That Passeth Understanding …

It will take a little longer than we think for the dust to settle on the debates such as the difficulties of modernism, and for us to unlearn the grimness that we have adopted in reading the poem.7 Neither perverse whim nor wishful thinking will take us where *The Waste Land* commentaries, even the best of them, promise to do. But it may be possible for even the first readers of *The Waste Land* today to see that poets do have a better option than Nora of *A Doll's House*. While she could only slam the door and walk out on Torvald who could not be saved from his self-delusions, the poets still try to see if their poetry could help the Torvalds of their day to introspect. In other words, as Eliot himself stated, he "may have expressed for [some of the more approving critics of *The Waste Land*] 'the disillusionment of a generation,' which is nonsense. I may have expressed for them their own illusion of being disillusioned," and wryly added, "but that did not form part of my intention" ("Thoughts After Lambeth" 324). When, by the 1950s however, the critical labour around *The Waste Land* seemed to grow unchecked, and the textual vivisection seemed to him rather intolerable, Eliot remarked that "it was evident that the writers did not resent the puzzle they thought I had set them— they liked it. Indeed, though they were unconscious of the fact, they invented the puzzle for the

pleasure of discovering the solution" (*On Poetry and Poets* 109). At the centennial gatherings, it would certainly help to consider that, or the poem, as the less puzzling option for future readers of Eliot's poem.

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Notes

1. I follow the Boni and Liveright edition's line numbers that appear parenthetically throughout this essay. The numbering in other editions of *The Waste Land* corresponds with this, except that in Boni and Liveright, ll.346 and 347 are counted as a single line.
2. The Faber fees are forbidding still. Towards small-scale readers and institutions, the Faber barons are uncharitable. And this, despite the easy e-access to websites that print *The Waste Land* with impunity, notes and all. Eliot himself, we recall, was averse to letting any of his poems, including *The Waste Land,* being cut up into fragmentary units as "excerpts" for their use in assorted anthologies. On the difficulties of quoting Eliot and the endless trouble for securing Faber permission for publishing scholarship on *The Waste Land* in particular, see Bernard Sharratt's "Interludes: copyright and criticism" in *On Eliot: These Fragments*, pp. 124-132.)
3. I have explored the use of scenes and voices here in juxtaposition to a crucial scene from Macbeth in "Using Reading Frames: An Example from *The Waste Land*." English in Education, 29.1, 1995, pp. 31-39.
4. For assorted reflections of this kind, see my *DA/ Datta: Teaching The Waste Land*, where teachers from various parts of the world tell us what new lessons in poetic pedagogy have animated their classroom discussions.

5. I am not sure whether this was the case with that Chinese student of whom William Empson writes: "I was rather pleased one year in China when I had a course on modern poetry, *The Waste Land* and all that, and at the end, a student wrote in the most friendly way to explain why he wasn't taking the exam. It wasn't that he couldn't understand *The Waste Land*, he said; in fact, after my lectures, the poem was self-explanatory: but it had turned out to be disgusting nonsense, and he had decided to join the engineering department. Now there, a teacher is bound to feel solid satisfaction; he is getting definite results." (Quoted in Harwood; his epigraph to chapter "Death by Exegesis," p. 86.)
6. *Bībhatsa* is caused by extreme revulsion, and physical and emotional discomfort. Unspeakably revolting episodes of obscene violence and offensive actions in A Facsimile and Transcripts are by far familiar to students. The "Me-too" scenes in *The Waste Land* apart, the dull canals, rodent-infested bylanes, and decayed holes have caught the attention of conservationists and ecological crusaders since the late 1920s. No other poem of the last century or this has run the whole gamut of senses and synonyms of waste generated by human beings since the Bible. Few poems in English show us the invaluable human lives set against such appalling light as the inhumanely wasteful and wasted lives in this poem. If one were to write a history of the modern packaging industry, I would imagine that author devotes a whole chapter to the packaging industry of *The Waste Land*, the poem's vastly-funded and relentlessly overworked factories of exegetical and textual commerce across the world. The IT returns of distinguished poets' archives are not public documents, but a safe guess would be that *The Waste Land* citations in books alone might have been annually fetching handsome rights-and-permissions fees for the poet's publishers/ estate.
7. I refer, of course, to Richard Poirier's widely-known essay called "The Difficulties of Modernism and the Modernism of Difficulty" of the late 1970s. "Modernism happened," he declared, "when reading got to be grim" (272), aligning academy, elitism, and privilege in a predictably complicated nexus.

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Isaac Sequeira Memorial Award-Winning Paper

Reading T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* as a Cross-Civilisational Dialogue

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Abstract: A process of gradual loss of tradition within the Western civilisation was precipitated by the First World War. The war's experience and the subsequent withering of the old values gave rise to a new trend in literature and the arts of the early twentieth century, which has been termed Modernism, of which T.S. Eliot's poetry is emblematic. According to a section of critics and cultural theorists, this trend prepared the ground for the postmodernist outlook. Whether or not such a claim is tenable, the text of Eliot's most well-known work, *The Waste Land*, seems to be actively looking for (or, at any rate, representing certain voices that are actively looking for) alternative value systems found in Non-Western civilisations, notably in the Indic civilisation. This paper will examine, using comparative and hermeneutic methods, whether the intertextuality between *The Waste Land* and the Hindu scripture *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* can be read not merely as a cross-cultural transaction in the literary form—a paradigm that has been employed in recent decades to interpret similar literary and cultural phenomena—but primarily as a cross-civilisational dialogue through the lyric mode. The paper will also offer an exposition on how 'cross-civilisational dialogue' may be understood and interpreted based on the critical reception of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and other works by Indian poet-critics like Bishnu Dey and V.K. Gokak. In doing so, the paper will attempt an enquiry into the ontology of categories like “culture," “civilisation," “Indic," and “Hellenic,” and more so that future attempts that adopt a similar hermeneutic approach may stand on firmer grounds.

Keywords: Eliot studies, Hermeneutic, Comparative, Lyric mode, Upaniṣhad, Civilisation, Indic, Hellenic, Western, Modernism, Postmodernism

Eliot, a steadfast believer in the enduring value and capacity of the European/Western civilisation as a force for good, has left several indications in his writings (of both the creative and the critical kinds) that he sometimes pondered the question of a possibility of holding a cross-civilisational dialogue. Even if this has not been a constant preoccupation of the poet of *The Waste Land* and The *Dry Salvages*, he certainly brings up the "problem confronting the builder of bridges" (Eliot 193) through imageries, symbols, suggestions, and as sub-themes in the poetry and essays that he wrote during his literary career. In this regard, the question that naturally occurs in the mind of the curious reader can perhaps be framed as follows: what were the pre-conditions and the actual dynamics of such dialogue across civilisations, firstly, as conceived in Eliot's thought and as reflected in his writings, and secondly, but no less importantly, in the reception of Eliot's poetic and critical works by other poets and critics belonging to not only a different literary and cultural tradition but an altogether different civilisation, with which the Western civilisation could engage in a serious dialogue, through the works of individual poets, critics, artists, thinkers, and creative minds in general?

This brings us to the reception of Eliot's poetic and critical works by Bishnu Dey—who donned many hats as a critic, comparativist, professor of literary studies, and, most importantly, a Bengali poet par excellence. The oeuvre of the poet of *The Waste Land* was greatly admired by this versatile twentieth-century Bengali poet, who saw himself as a "progressive artist", and early on in his critical engagement with Eliot's works, he admitted, "how difficult it is for a foreigner to write in brief on the poet who, at the age of nineteen, wrote that strangely mature love-song of the prude Alfred J. Prufrock and whose consistent development has led to the four most important English poems of the century from *Burnt Norton to Little Gidding*" (Dey 82). Before moving on to outlining what he perceived as the shortfalls of Eliot's civilisational vision as reflected in his critical works, Dey admiringly

concedes that, "Eliot has shown the most complete and vicissitudinous development in contemporary English poetry" (Dey 82).

Offering a comprehensive critical assessment of Eliot's work, something which will prove crucial in our reading of *The Waste Land* as an instance of cross-civilisational dialogue between Europe and Asia (and India in particular), Dey identifies the following points as the most important features of Eliot's work:

> • "[T]he quality of pain" or "the note of romantic agony which moves his readers so deeply and lends to his images the magic of symbols." (82)
>
> • Addressing, "in magnificent verse," the conflict—a "maladjustment of opposites"—of values and ideals (and the lack thereof), as well as the conflict between ideas and realities, themes that were constantly playing out within the individual self and in the Modern societies of Eliot's contemporary Europe. (83)

In the following paragraphs, let us elaborate on these essential features or hallmarks of Eliot's poetic and critical corpus, as perceived by Bishnu Dey.

Dey locates the source of what he has dubbed a "romantic agony" perceptible in "the last romantic" Eliot's poetry, in the characteristic conflict between received values, ideals, and ideas. The stark lived realities of a war-ravaged European/Western civilisation, which literally lay in ruins during Eliot's life and times as a result of the two World Wars and their catastrophic impact on the economic, psychological, and spiritual lives of the European peoples. In Dey's words, the outcome of this was a "maladjustment of opposites", a trait which was "not personal but typical of the age and of the society itself" (Dey 83). The successful capturing in English verse of this failure of the "Modern Society", i.e., post-war Europe, to bring any semblance of a meaningful harmony between "the opposites" gives Eliot's works their special and lasting significance in the assessment of Bishnu Dey. "The Opposites",

mentioned by Dey in this context, indicate the apparently unbridgeable duality between pre-war Europe's civilisational values and ideals and post-war traumatised Europe's material and psychological realities on the other.

In *What Krishna Meant: An Essay on T.S. Eliot*, Dey pays homage to the poet of *The Waste Land*, despite some fundamental disagreements he had with the latter's outlook in general, and in particular with the poet's abiding faith in European/Western civilisation as a force that can resolve, once and for all, the aforementioned conflicts between opposing values and realities. Dey's respectful homage to Eliot is mainly due to the fact that the latter not only lived through the experience of this conflict of maladjusted opposites, thereby constituting an example for later generations of poets, critics, and creative minds in general, but he also successfully captured that disheartening—at times traumatising—experience "in magnificent verse" (Dey 83). Dey pins the profound influence of Eliot on modern (and even postmodern) poets upon the former's acute awareness of the conflict of opposites in his society and the self and "the consequent attitude of objectivity". In Dey's critical assessment, the generations of poets that succeed T.S. Eliot "find in his poetry the quality of a releasing force" when they encounter Eliot's treatment of this sense of conflict throughout his poetic corpus (Dey 83).

Elsewhere Dey has interpreted Eliot's abiding faith in (and not merely a romantic idealisation and even idolisation of) the Western civilisation as "Europeanism" (27). For Eliot, Dey notes, this Western civilisation is best represented in and by:

> 1. the pre-Christian or "pagan" mythologies, the classical literature and the arts that germinated within that milieu, and
>
> 2. Christianity itself, and the medieval as well as pre-Modern classics of literature and the arts—those that were achieved within a Christian milieu and typically under the imposing presence of the Church at the backdrop of the general culture in Europe (prominent examples of such literary classics would

be: the Catholic Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* and the Puritan John Milton's *Paradise Lost*).

Eliot has drawn many symbols and images (not to mention the many quotations) that are ubiquitously found in his poetic corpus, mainly from these twofold sources. In fact, as Dey points out, Eliot has categorically mentioned in his two lectures on Virgil these twofold sources as "two stages" of the European/Western civilisation, the first of these being the "Classical period," which is most characteristically represented by Virgil, and the second being the "Christian period," of which Dante was the most typical representative (Dey 27). This shows us the contours of Western civilisation as imagined and represented in Eliot's thoughts and works.

Moreover, herein also lies the crux of Dey's criticism of Eliot's poetry and his aesthetics in general, something that gives us a measure of the worldview of Eliot, the pioneer of Modernism in English poetry, against the values and aesthetic sensibilities of another poet from another era and another living civilisation, and thus one belonging to another living literary tradition that is totally different from the European literary tradition. Dey accuses the poet of Prufrock of explaining away an entire literary-cultural-historical period—one that he calls the "post-Christian or Capitalist stage of West European civilisation"—as a mere complication in Economics (27). This stage or period, though a global phenomenon, belongs prominently (if not primarily) in the West on account of the fact that the material and socio-political conditions that gave rise to this period first manifested in Western European nations before they could spread elsewhere. It is another matter that Dey might have missed, or perhaps did not want to admit, that there is also the possibility that Eliot did not grant any lasting aesthetic and spiritual value at all to what the Post-Christian or Capitalistic age could offer to humanity in the form of literature and art.

However, even while levelling this accusation, Dey, perhaps a bit inadvertently, brings out the operative principle of Eliot's poetics and, indeed, his entire aesthetics—which is the conviction that "the world can be saved and harmony brought about" between conflicting realities that currently only exist in grotesquely maladjusted arrangements within the individual's self as well as the society at large" (Dey 27) by that which is most sublime in the Western civilisation—in the best that it has to offer to the modern/postmodern European individual and society and indeed the whole of humanity: viz., its poetry, its ancient mythologies, its grand religious art and architecture, and the highest peaks of its diverse, sometimes obscure, spiritual terrain.

Dey also describes Eliot as "the great poet of self-consciousness" and thus recognises self-consciousness as "the subject matter of his poetry" (83). On that account, he places Eliot in the same league as Kafka, Proust, Joyce, and Woolf, observing that what these writers have achieved in "easier" prose, Eliot has achieved in the domain of poetry, which is presumably a more complex genre. "In other words, according to Dey, Eliot has undertaken a daring journey into self-consciousness – the kind of journey that would be a lot more difficult to embark on through the lyric mode than through the narrative mode (i.e., in the modern genres of novel and short story)—

and successfully charted quite a bit of that blurred terrain using the medium of poetry. Dey also credits Eliot for demonstrating a sincere intent to find a sensible adjustment or resolution of the conflict-ridden self and society in post-war Europe (83).

Against this backdrop, let us take a close look at the Indian influence on Eliot's works and explore if that may constitute a dialogue of any kind across civilisational differences.

Firstly, there is the possibility of finding the "universality of meaning" in great works of art. Eliot's *The Waste Land* certainly falls in the category of great art, as the sheer amount of attention devoted to the poem, the scholarship and critical literature on it, as well as a general

cultural consensus about its greatness accumulated over a century would testify. Therefore, it would make sense if we look for the universality of meaning (across space and time, across cultures and civilisations of widely different varieties), of any kind, in what the poem conveys. In this connection, we recall V.K. Gokak's remark on the poem, wherein he observes:

> Eliot's *Waste Land* [sic] is not just the voice of a lost generation. It is the picture of a period of aridity in the life of an individual as well as in the culture of a continent. The idealisation of an object or theme thus means the apprehension and delineation of its most essential features, eliminating all accidental qualities. The isolation of and concentration on essential traits results in a certain universality of meaning. (3)

Gokak's use of the phrase "the culture of a continent" gains a special significance when we read it within the framework of a civilisation, which essentially consists in the acknowledgement of a common inheritance of tradition claimed by that portion of humanity which is contained within a vast geographical entity for a sustained period of time, and a certain commonality of thought or inclination of the best or representative minds of that cultural-geographical complex. Interestingly, Gokak connects the image of aridity from his reading of *The Waste Land* with "the life of an individual as well as…the culture of a continent" (3). This simultaneous connecting of a specific trait, which is a poetic theme in its own right, with the individual life and the continent's culture, and the recognition of "universality of meaning" in the poetic representation of that trait/theme by an Indian critic, who was equally well-versed in the literary traditions and innovations of his own civilisation as well as of the European/Western civilisation, is a concrete example of what we have called "cross-civilisational dialogue", and not merely the apparent presence of *Upanishadic* references in the form of (partial) quotes, paraphrases, stories, symbols, and concepts in *The Waste Land.*

However, one must admit that it is indeed tempting to think of these intertextual references in the poem as an instance of a dialogue attempted, if not actually held, between representative voices of two civilisations (a representative text, or if we are allowed a further leap of reasonable imagination, between the voices of the *Upanishadic* Rishis and the creator of *The Waste Land*). This is especially so in the case of a poet who was only too aware of a crisis that had spread across civilisations in his lifetime and thus had bound those civilisations by the thread of shared destiny—of the lines from Eliot's "The Dry Salvages": "When there is the distress of nations and perplexity/ Whether on the shores of Asia or in the Edgeware Road" (Eliot 199).

Furthermore, wasn't Eliot equally a believer in the possibility of building bridges across overwhelming differences of space, time, and cultures, as much as he was a believer in his own 'inherited' tradition and spiritually enthused civilisational culture? Why else would he bother to wonder what a "brown god" or a dark godlike Sri Krishna meant ("I sometimes wonder if that is what Krishna meant" in *The Dry Salvages*) (Eliot 197), and imbued with the colours of his own "life of the individual as well as the culture of a continent" the timeless utterance of the charioteer of the greatest warrior of *Mahabharata*: "And do not think of the fruit of action./Fare forward." (Eliot 198) In the same work (*The Dry Salvages*), Eliot mentions the immensely suggestive "problem confronting the builder of bridges" (193) before offering a poetic hermeneutic of one of the central messages of the *Bhagavad Gita*. This text-to-text (and not mere intertextual) correspondence and poet-to-poet encounter (and not mere influence nor reception) also consist of a cross-civilisational dialogue of one kind.

This personalised hermeneutic, this phenomenological survey of another civilisation's representative text in the poet's own understanding, which is not merely a personal understanding, but one that is imbued with the manner of absorbing or understanding ideas and objects that are characteristic of an entire continent, of a whole civilisation, with its widely

differing experiences through time and climatic-spatial conditions, is what we find achieved in a superlative manner in the final stanzas of *The Waste Land: V. What the Thunder Said*. Here the three attributes *Datta* (the quality of giving that is characteristic of the asura), *Dayadhvam* (the quality of compassion that is characteristic of humanity), and *Dāmyata* (the quality of self-control, characteristic of the god or the godlike), forming a psychology-based framework that the poet borrows from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, innovatively interprets, and offers as a tentative resolution of the chaotic confusion and indeed conflict of a civilisation's values and ideals, are mediated through those as mentioned above hermeneutic, which is at the same time deeply personal (i.e. bears the mark of the individual creative artist's genius or *pratibhā*) and characteristically (European/Western) civilisational. The poet first interprets the quality of giving, the first of the three attributes, when it reaches its zenith—when the giving involves the complete sacrifice of the self to something that inspires one's awe ("the awful daring of a moment's surrender") (Eliot 70), something that remains obscure and unacknowledged in a European cultural milieu in general and in the British culture in particular. Secondly, the poet refers to the quality of compassion, which is simultaneously interpreted as a source of strength and a source of weakness that can even bring one's downfall, a duality characteristic of the human being, by invoking the fragile protagonist of a Western classic, viz., Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. Finally, the poet takes up the quality of self-control for his interpretation; he evokes a clear image of a calm sea and a heart that beats "obedient/ To controlling hands." Thus, it can be understood how Eliot has forged a bridge across civilisational texts in particular and civilisations in general, between the past and the present from different cultural locations, and has demonstrated a marvellous mode of holding dialogues across not just literary traditions, but across civilisations.

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The Sense of *Shantih* in *The Waste Land*

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Abstract: From a reader's point of view, asking what 'Shantih' means or communicates in *The Waste Land* leads to a paradox. It demands an explanation knowing fully well that a simple making of a sense (worst, a paraphrase) is neither applicable nor in any way helpful. Yet, semantically—and in the poem, too—the utterance 'Shantih' signals an end of all explanations. Yet, against the knowledge of such paradoxical essays like the by now formidably established one by Cleanth Brooks—"What Does Poetry Communicate?"—this paper—through a survey of all the seven Sanskrit words in the poem—would make a humble attempt to understand what might be Eliot's intentions of ending this poem with 'Shantih', being not so satisfied with Eliot's notes about it as an appendix to the poem. The paper would seek guidance about the placement and significance of this word from Indian knowledge systems, with a concomitant awareness of the avant-gardist project by Modern writers to deliberately make their works difficult and elitist.

Keywords: *Shantih*, Paradox, Poetry & Communication, Indian Knowledge System, Avant-garde.

The end is where we start from

– Eliot “Little Gidding”

The Waste Land [1] has seven Sanskrit words: *Ganga, Himavant* (the syllable/utterance), *DA, Datta*, *Dayadhvam*, *Damyata,* and *Shantih*. All these seven Sanskrit words occur in *The Waste Land's* fifth and last section, titled "What the Thunder Said." Ganga is the least problematic, referring to the River Ganges. However, the swift change of the locale—from the Thames explicitly mentioned in section three, "The Fire Sermon", to the Ganges—is remarkable and is now recognised as the spatiotemporal sweep of *The Waste Land*, making it a universal work

of High Modern literature. It is interesting to note the description of these two rivers in the poem. Thames' "tent is broken" is what we come across at the opening of "The Fire Sermon," a not-so-easy phrase for the reader as one has to perceive what a 'river's tent' might mean. Going by the meaning of the word 'tent', a covering, maybe of the overhanging branches of trees (because there is mention of "the last fingers of leaf"); or, a shelter, one can associate then the sky as the 'river's tent' which has suffered a rupture and lies' broken'.[2] The banks of the Thames are described as "brown land" (bereft of greenery, the season then would be autumn) across which there is a wind blowing, "unheard". The are no women (the 'nymphs') or men (friends to the nymphs, "the loitering heirs of City directors") visiting the Thames due to which the river is saved at the moment from being choked by pollution through the dumping of things like cigarette butts, cardboard boxes, liquor bottles etc. However, the speaker in the third section of the poem—the Celtic mythological Fisher King, or the Classical mythological Tiresias whom

Eliot designates in his 'Notes' as "the most important personage in the poem" (72), or the literary Ferdinand of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*–asks "Sweet Thames" to "run softly," meaning there is water in the river. So, the theme of aridity, which is a prominent one for *The Waste Land*, is suggestive only of the character or the soul of human beings and not of the external landscape. By contrast Ganga, the lifeline of millions of people in India and regarded by them as the most sacred river in the world, venerated through testimony right from *the Mahabharata*, one that washes away all sins, Ganga in this poem is mentioned as "was sunken" whereby there can be two interpretations: the mythological *descent* of Ganga on the earth all the way down to the netherworld through the sea[3]; and, the modern-day Ganga that factually comes down from the source in the Himalayas, but its water content had 'sunk' because—as mentioned in the poem— it "waited for rain" thereby indicating a reduction in the life-sustaining potency of the river[4]. Regarding *Himavant*, Eliot broadly uses this name to

mean the tall mountain ranges of the Himalayas. The word in Sanskrit comes to mean frosty or icy at the literal level. However, *Himvant* or *Himvat* is also a variation of *Himraj* or *Parvateshwar*, meaning lord of the mountains, which personifies the Himalayan range. So, at one level, 'lord of the mountains' might also mean the tallest peak, or Mount Everest.[5]

The following five Sanskrit words in *The Waste Land*: *DA, Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata* and *Shantih* are all interrelated and drawn—as mentioned by Eliot himself—from the *Brhadāranyaka Upanisad*, Chapter V. It would be pertinent—to understand the first four of the above five words—to cite that section here (which I have taken from the *Brhadāranyaka Upanisad* with a commentary of Śankarācārya, translated by Swami Madhavananda of the Rama Krishna Math) and then see how Eliot alters these words in the poem:

> Three classes of *Prajāpati's* sons lived a life of continence with their father, *Prajāpat*i (*Virāj*) – the gods, men and Asuras. The gods, on the completion of their term, said, "Please instruct us." He told them the syllable '*Da*' (and asked), "Have you understood?" (They) said, "We have. You tell us: Control yourselves." (He) said, "Yes, you have understood."
>
> Then the men said to him, "Please instruct us." He told them the same syllable, '*Da*' (and asked), 'Have you understood?' (They) said, 'We have. You tell us: Give.' (He) said, 'Yes, you have understood.'
>
> Then the Asuras said to him, 'Please instruct us.' He told them the same syllable, '*Da*' (and asked), 'Have you understood?' (They) said, 'We have. You tell us: Have compassion.' (He) said, 'Yes, you have understood.' The heavenly voice repeats that very thing, the cloud, as '*Da*,' '*Da*,' '*Da*': 'Control yourselves,' 'Give,' and 'Have compassion.'
>
> Therefore, one should learn these three—self-control, charity and compassion.

It can be observed from the above passage that: a) *Prajāpati* (or Lord Brahma) cross-checks with his three classes of male progeny each time after uttering the syllable 'Da' whether they have understood it right or not and, in fact, ascertains that all the three classes have indeed derived the proper meaning of the utterance as applied to them; and, b) the order of instruction by *Prajāpati* in the *Brhadāranyaka Upanisad* is the gods—to whom he states to practice self-control because being gods they were naturally egotistic and unruly—followed by men—to whom he instructs to give because they have the propensity to hoard—and followed in the end by the asuras or demons to whom he commands to be compassionate, as demons are by nature cruel. Interestingly, Eliot, in *The Waste Land*, alters this order to men, demons and then gods suggesting perhaps that in the twentieth century, neither gods nor demons exist; there are only men capable of possessing god-like and/or demonic qualities, and, therefore, the question of being attuned towards communication with a higher power was irrelevant. It can be recollected that the phase in Eliot's life leading up to 1922, when this poem was published, was a time when Eliot was intensely searching for faith to latch on to. Hence, this was also the exploratory—if not the agnostic—phase of Eliot's life.

Robert Crawford, in a relatively recent biography titled *Young Eliot*, mentions an incident in August 1919 when *Tradition and the Individual Talent* was in the draft stage that Eliot – on tour in France where he met Ezra Pound "revealed [to Pound] something of his ongoing wrestling with religion: 'I am afraid of the life after death.'… Even in the French sunshine, a dark substratum of religious anxiety continued to perturb him, filling him at times with a sense of dispossession, of emptiness, though usually, he hid this from his friends" (333). Another striking aspect is Eliot's acceptance of the equivalence of the Sanskrit words, especially that of *dayadhvam*, the English of which in Eliot's 'Notes' is '(to) sympathise' that—apart from connoting a hierarchy of fortune or, even power with one sympathised upon—reduces the expression of this feeling to a behavioural one allowing it to be expressed either

genuinely or as a put on. Whereas, the more accurate approximation of *dayadhvam*, i.e., 'to be compassionate' implies nurturing a quality such that it becomes intrinsic to the personality; after all, the objective of Brahma was to instil values into his progenies and shape them from within[6]. Eliot might have missed out on this vital aspect of translation because he was using the German translation of the *Brhadāranyaka Upanisad* by Paul Deussen, published in 1897 and titled *Sechzig Upanishads des Veda* (or, Sixty *Upanishads* of the *Veda*). In his 'Notes' to *The Waste Land,* Eliot again mentions this work. So, this could be either a misreading of the German translation or a mistranslation by Deussen himself. [7] Whether German or English translations of the *Brhadāranyaka Upanisad,* it can safely be conjectured— although Eliot did learn Sanskrit from the renowned Professor Charles Rockwell Lanman at Harvard—that he did not read the *Brhadāranyaka Upanisad* originally in Sanskrit. However, it was because of his training in Indic Philology and attending Professor Lanman's Harvard lectures, where he drew parallels between Buddhist and Christian traditions, and his talks on *nirvāna,* that the early thoughts and jottings on what would finally become "The Fire Sermon" and "What the Thunder Said" in *The Waste Land* developed (Crawford 168-69).

Eliot also attended Lanman's courses on the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and critics have detected the influence of this seminal Indian text on many of Eliot's works; themes in *The Waste Land* distinctly bearing the influence is about life, death and re-birth, and that time and action/inaction.[8] Another interesting aspect of translation is Eliot's choice of translating non-English words and phrases in the 'Notes' to *The Waste Land*. It can be observed that right from the epigraph to the poem to the use of words, phrases and lines in other European languages, Eliot provides no translation to the readers. But when it comes to the four Sanskrit words: *datta, dayadhwam, damyata,* and *shantih*—Eliot jots down their English equivalents in his 'Notes'. This could be part of the High Modernist project to make literary works deliberately complex and is presumably so because Eliot pitches this 'difficult' poem to those European

readers who would be—to borrow from I. A. Richards—'active' enough to get the meaning of the portions in European languages in the poem, but, knowing Sanskrit, even for them, would be asking for too much.

Finally, the last Sanskrit word in *The Waste Land,* i.e., *shantih*. It would be relevant here to note that the word *shantih* comes from the *shanti mantras* in the *Upanishads.* Although the word is generally translated into English as 'peace', the *shanti mantras* are uttered to reduce or overcome the ill effects of three types of obstacles: the first being that from the physical realm, or the external world like from wild animals, natural calamities, and even strangers (called *ādi-bhautika*); the second from the supernatural world, or from spirits, ghosts, deities and demi-gods (called *ādi-daivika*); and, third, from the internal realm which includes diseases, pain, laziness, and absent-mindedness—things arising from one's own body and mind (called *adhyātmika)*. In other words, the *shanti mantras* reduce or remove chaos and bring peace and harmony. Besides the *Brhadāranyaka Upanisad, shanti mantras* are also in other *Upanishads* like the *Taittriya, Kena, Chandogya, Aitareya, Mundaka,* and *Mandukya* among others. Eliot's last entry in his 'Notes' is *Shantih* which is mentioned as "*Shantih.*" Repeated as here, a formal ending to an *Upanishad.* 'The Peace which passeth understanding' is our equivalent to this word" (76). 'The Peace which passeth understanding' is from Philippians 4, verse 6, where God—if we turn to Him in crises—promises a lasting peace beyond belief and beyond understanding. Incidentally, one of the famous quotes by the Dalai Lama on peace has the *Upanishadic* keyword 'compassion' in it when he says: "Only through compassion and inner peace, can one spread peace in the world". Incidentally, *Upanishad* means [*upa + nishad=* by+sit down] (students) sitting down near a teacher while receiving spiritual knowledge. In this poem, there is indirect mention of two great teachers besides Brahma: Buddha (in "The Fire Sermon") and Jesus in the journey to Emmaus portion in "What the Thunder Said"[9], but the Buddha section ends with a repetition of the word 'burning'; the

promise of the resurrection of Jesus goes unnoticed because it is not recognised, "Who is the third who walks always beside you?/…But who is that on the other side of you?" (67); and, tellingly, the end of the poem with the thrice repetition of *Shantih* misses the prefixed utterance *Aum*, as it ought to be, and as it is in all the Upanishadic closure with the *shanti* mantras. *Aum,* or *Om* as *A Concise Encyclopedia of Hinduism* explains, is the mystical and auspicious syllable whose "prolonged intonation is associated with the creative sound through which the universe came into being" (32). *Aum* consists of the first (a) and the last (u) vowel and the last consonant (m) of the Sanskrit alphabet and therefore encompasses all words (which consist of vowels and consonants). The *Mandukya Upanishad* identifies it with the four stages of consciousness (a-waking consciousness; u-dream consciousness; m-deep sleep; aum-fourth state). *AUM/OM* is used to introduce and conclude a religious work, an act of worship, or an important task (idem). One of the reasons to construct a poem—literally fragment by fragment — from the many canonical works of both Europe and the East (besides making his space through his 'individual talent' in the European literary 'tradition') alluding to grand narratives like *the Bible*, mythologies like that of *Tiresias and the Sibyls*, writers of the stature of World Literature like Dante and Shakespeare, and popular songs like the one about Mrs, Porter and her daughter was to subscribe to the poetic belief then held by the High Moderns that the newness of poetry — and indeed all art—lay in its difficulty. After all, the times were difficult after the just-concluded Great War. Eliot was to make this aspect explicit in an essay two years after the War and a year before the publication of *The Waste Land* titled "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921), where he stated: "It appears likely that poets in our civilisation, as it exists at present, must be difficult…The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, to force, to dislocate, if necessary, language into its meaning" (Lodge 70).

Hence, the many tongues that speak the poem create the semblance of a multitude of lost voices from different societies across space and time–Greek, Latin, Italian, French, German and Sanskrit, besides English–is part of the deliberate High Modernist avant-gardist agenda. However, Eliot did believe—and more so after his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism by 1928—in a world beyond just the phenomenal, and did evince in the poem itself the Platonic desire for peace and order to descend upon the world which was then just a 'heap of broken images'—one of the most poignant lines, tonally, uttered in the voice of the Fisher King, towards the end of the poem—"Shall I at least set my lands in order?" (69) Yet, this was also true, that at the time of writing *The Waste Land* often recovering from bouts of a nervous breakdown, the natural and the human world for Eliot seemed to be out of harmony with any cosmic or higher design. In this sense, etymologically, *The Waste Land* might be said to be anticipating the literature of the Absurd, as the Latin absurdus comes to mean 'out of harmony' in English. Hence, the reference to madness or insanity is just before the poem's end: "Hieronymus mad againe" (69). Hence the disjuncture between *Shantih*, which is uttered—as it ought to be—thrice, but without the cosmic syllable prefixing it, i.e., *Aum* (the first utterance reminding us that 'in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God'). Nevertheless, God seems to be absent, or at least is silent, in *The Waste Land*. For the inhabitants of *The Waste Land*—like 'the hollow men'—salvation and *shantih* are perpetually deferred.

Notes

1. Lines and phrases from this poem for this paper have been cited from T.S. Eliot's *Collected Poems* 1909 – 1962 (Faber & Faber).

2. One is reminded of a similar unusual—'new' or Avant-gardist—description of the sky in *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, where it is described as "Like a patient etherised upon a table".

3. In one myth, Ganga's mother is Mena, and her father is Himavat, the personification of the Himalayas. Whereas, the myth about the creation of Ganga describes that when Vishnu, in his dwarf avatar, took a stride of the universe with his two steps, his toe accidentally punctured a wall of the universe spilling the waters of Ganga – then called Mandakini (mandāka in Sanskrit roughly translates as 'the Ganges of Heaven'). The sacred water of Ganga was — through a prior myth about a boon given to King Bhagiratha asked from Vishnu through a thousand-year penance—to wash and purify the ashes of Bhagiratha's 60,000 ancestors and permit their ascent to heaven. The rivers Bhagirathi and Alaknanda are the two headstreams merging at Devprayag in Garhwal, becoming, after that, the Ganga. The purifying power of the Ganga (making souls attain heaven) comes from this myth of King Bhagiratha.

4. 'Ganga' in Sanskrit means 'swift-goer' from the root gam 'to go'; an inflection of this same root becomes gwam, i.e., 'to come'. Knowing this helps the reader better contextualise this word's meaning in the poem.

5. Mount Everest is a relatively recent name given to the Highest Himalayan peak by Andrew Waugh, the British Surveyor General of India from the Royal Geographic Society. George Everest was Waugh's senior/predecessor.

6. I arrived at a similar observation during my (unpublished) doctoral research in the years between 2000 and 2002 entitled "Cultural Criticism: An Assessment with Special Reference to Matthew Arnold, T.S. Eliot, F.R. Leavis and Raymond Williams" (pp. 113 -114).

7. However, it has to be said that Deussen's translation of and commentary on the Upanishads is still read and referenced very widely in the West, the proof of it being his mention in Wikipedia on the Upanishads.

8. Siew-Yue Killingley's essay (referred to below) would be particularly helpful in studying this aspect.

9. It is a relevant piece of information to note here that "What the Thunder Said" was virtually left untouched by the editing scissors of Ezra Pound, as is evident from *The Waste Land*: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound edited with an introduction by Valerie Eliot.

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The Waste Land as a Palimpsest of the Pandemic

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Abstract: The value of a work of art or literature is its endurance over time. T.S. Eliot's epic poem *The Waste Land* (1922) no doubt mirrored various themes unique to its day. However, the mystique of the work lies in its baffling allusions and twists of subject matter. This aporia enables us to enter the text at will, destabilise it, dismantle it, and 'rearrange' the images to articulate a different narrative in time and space. In so doing, this inquiry tries to wrest the text from its European moorings and instead argues that it is the Ur-narrative of the COVID-19 pandemic. The poem's structure and its division into five parts may be read as different phases of the pandemic. 'Burial of the Dead' could refer to the burial of the dead during COVID; 'A Game of Chess' may be seen as the many indoor games we played during lockdown or quarantine; 'The Fire Sermon' dwells on the symbol of fire as purgation during the pandemic; 'Death by Water' is a reflection on age and youth; 'What the Thunder Said' is India's message to the world not only in time of COVID but in all circumstances.

Keywords: Aporia, Death, Pandemic T.S. Eliot, Waste Land

Introduction

Traditional approaches to Eliot draw attention to the fact that the work was written in the aftermath of World War I (1914-1918). However, if the Great War was the pretext and the inspiration for *The Waste Land,* could the work not also be Janus faced and looking forward to encompassing the wasteland caused by COVID a century later? As metaphors slide, it is possible to mine the text for interesting parallels to our present scenario.

As we commemorate the hundred years of *the Waste Land*, we must also take cognizance of the influenza pandemic of 1918-1919, which occurred a hundred years ago.

Both Eliot and Vivienne were stricken by it. *The Waste Land* was written in the aftermath of this experience. The disjointedness in the poem may be seen as an expression of the disorientation, fever and sleeplessness Eliot was going through. Following the death of his father and aunt, Eliot had a nervous breakdown in 1921.

Eliot looks towards myths of spring and renewal in *The Waste Land* to provide healing and solace to a fractured world. In a post-COVID world, the text continues to perform the same function – since the concerns are timeless.

As one teases out the allusions in *The Waste Land,* one is privy to the vast storehouse of knowledge Eliot was heir to and which he uses eclectically. The work is couched in fragments from opera, medieval English verse, the Bible, and card games. This offers valuable insights into his poetic practice.

The number of people it has laid waste to is significant in the pandemic. This wasteland of the last two years has seen 2 million deaths worldwide, per figures in 2020 alone. (Guterres) It is, therefore, appropriate that in today's 21st-century wasteland, Eliot begins with the sombre section on 'The Burial of the Dead.'

I. The Burial of the Dead

I had not thought death had undone so many.

– T.S. Eliot

The 'Order of the Burial of the Dead' is the name given to the burial service of the church of England. Eliot reaches into orthodox liturgy to frame his epic poem. He chooses a funeral rite to express best 'the nihilism of his generation' (Spurr). Yet, in the context of COVID, the connotation can be very different.

The irony is that during COVID, the rite of the burial of the dead is more fondly remembered since, at the height of COVID, even this rite was denied to infected persons. When the virus felled Padma Shri Bhai Nirmal Singh Khalsa in Verka in 2020, locals objected

to his body being buried within the city of Amritsar and locked the gates to the burial site. He was finally buried under a tree at Shukarchuk outside the city in the glare of a car's headlights (Mendonca).

In Goa, maestro Santiago Lusardi Girelli (41) left us during COVID last year. Due to the COVID restrictions, he did not have a proper burial. After some prayers at the outer door of the Archbishop's House, the body was sent away in a mortuary van.

Though COVID's entry into the world was officially seen on 31 December 2019, it was in April 2020 that India in particular, faced the brunt of the virus with the lockdown. In that sense, April was the cruellest month with fear over the city. On 30 April 2021, India recorded 4 lac infections in a single day, with 3464 deaths reported on that day.

In the opening lines of 'The Burial of the Dead,' Eliot skips from one season to the next. That is how the world weathered COVID, whether it was winter, summer or rain.

Eliot taps into the unease of the people. He will show us "fear in a handful of dust" (30). There was fear everywhere. No one knew who would be the next victim. Donne's Meditation IV is invoked to help us ponder that we live and die in the body at the end. Indeed, the fickleness was brought out most painfully during the pandemic.

During the pandemic, senior citizens were the most brutal hit. (Ecclesiastes 12), which Eliot refers to, is a catalogue of the aridity of old age. It is a grim scenario where 'man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets' (Eccles 12:5). Eliot cites this verse from the Bible to provide the context for "And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief" (23). Indeed, the senior citizens had to go from pillar to post to be admitted to a hospital. When that was not forthcoming, they lay down and died. "I was neither / Living nor dead, and I knew nothing" (39-40). Even Madame Sosostris suffers from cold – the ailment most dreaded during COVID times.

In a lockdown, the silent streets made the city look unreal (60), devoid of character with not even zombies around. It is a moment when we confront our own corporeality. It takes Eliot all the effort to recreate this vista. For this, he has to summon up his previous poems for the objective correlative to his many descriptions. One such is 'The Death of Saint Narcissus' (1912), where he looks at the shadow metaphysically (25-29). It is from his spiritual journey that Eliot arrives at a trope to frame the wasteland.

The allusion in the opening line (line 1) to the prologue to Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales could well be taken from the migrant tales as they trudged back on foot to their homelands after the unannounced lockdown. The pilgrims in The Canterbury Tales do not know each other, but they help each other just like the migrants. Some of the migrants did not make it home.

Eliot inverts the gaiety of spring expressed in Chaucer, and though the parallelism is evident, the sentiments are the opposite. Similarly, Eliot recalls 'The Old Vicarage: Grantchester' (1912) by Rupert Brooke to provide a universe of plenitude, which he sharply contrasted in *The Waste Land* a decade later.

The use of Wagner's opera *Tristan and Isolde* (1865) is a metaphor for how loved ones were separated during the pandemic. There is the overwhelming drive of *Tristan and Isolde* towards Thanatos which is also seen in James Thompson. Interestingly, Eliot chose this opera. During COVID, the waters of the sea separated many from being with their loved ones in their last moments. COVID restrictions did not allow them to enter the country. It seemed like Tristan who waited for Isolde as he lay dying.

Madame Sosostris recalls the many fortune tellers and clairvoyants who had to resort to online sessions during the pandemic. (Elliott) People were terrified about the future. They were looking for hope and reassurance. The tarot cards are a chilling reminder that one does not know who will be struck by COVID next. The various images on the tarot cards could

also be interpreted as redemptive. Like Ariel in Shakespeare's *Tempest* (1611), we can look forward to "a sea change" that is "rich and strange" (Pierce).

When death is sudden and in huge numbers, many are spiritually unprepared. In *The Inferno*, Dante sees a long stream of people and is surprised that death has claimed so many. These are believed to be spirits who could not discern between good and evil in life and cared only for themselves (Southam).

Eliot enquires about the corpse in the garden (71). In ancient fertility rites, images of Gods were buried in the fields to enable regeneration. During COVID, with everything in lockdown, nature got a reprieve. Pollution levels went down, and the earth began to breathe once more. The hiatus was necessary to heal the planet.

II. A Game of Chess

The pandemic was all about waiting and watching. It was a game of chess with death. As the virus spread, vaccines were developed. As the virus mutated, more powerful vaccines and doses were the day's order.

People were forced to spend time indoors. The carom boards came out; the chess boards were the rage, and card games held people in thrall. People looked across balconies and played music to soothe their nerves. One could dip into literature and the classics. There was so much time on our hands during the lockdown.

What comes across in this section is the pirouette within closed spaces which the lockdown succeeded in doing. People were trapped in their own homes with nothing to see except the same people day in and day out. The breakdown of communication is emphasised in the heightened nerves: "Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak" (112). The absurdism echoes Beckett´s *Waiting for Godot.*

We did not have the luxury of grieving. There were so many dying. The sleeping dead had to be dug up from their graves to make place for new corpses. In many cases, the loved

ones were not informed. In many cases, people lost the bones of their loved ones. “I think we are in a rats’ alle /Where the dead men lost their bones” (115-16).

Faced with house arrest, one turned desperately to establishing a routine to make sense of life. ‘What shall I do now? What shall I do?’ and later, “The hot water at ten./And if it rains, a closed car at four./And we shall play a game of chess” (131, 135-7). Yet even this innocuous pastime is not endured without dread. The players press ‘lidless eyes . . . waiting for a knock upon the door’ (138). The knock could mean bad news or officials sent to seal off the apartment to prevent infection from spreading.

There are many examples of unrequited love, viz. *Antony and Cleopatra*; *Hamlet* and *Ophelia; Dido* and *Aeneas*. The raping of Philomela and the seduction of Bianca point to the excesses of the pandemic when the women were made even more vulnerable (Sen).

Moreover, there is always the insistence of time, ‘Hurry up please, it is time’ (153). One does not know how much time we have left. So much so that the ‘good night’ seems to be the final goodnight (172).

III. The Fire Sermon

The section starts with ruination. “The river’s tent is broken” (174). There is putrefaction everywhere: “A rat crept softly through the vegetation/Dragging its slimy belly on the bank” (187-88).

Later we are faced with “White bodies naked on the low damp ground/And bones cast in a low dry garret./Rattled by a rat’s foot” (193). During the pandemic, dead bodies were everywhere. Hospitals were overfull with them. The human body had to suffer the ignominy of being trussed and tossed carelessly on the floor for disposal. Smoke from mass funeral pyres snaked into the sky. There was no one to claim the bodies coursing down the Ganga River.

COVID also saw widespread abuse of human rights. Anti-CAA agitations spiralled into violence among communities. In one case, a daughter waited for her father's foot—that was all that was left—after a mob in Delhi murdered him. Even that was impossible, as she was told she could claim the foot only after COVID had abated (Mendonca).

In the pandemic, it was easy to be Tiresias. 'And I, Tiresias, have foresuffered all…/I who have sat by Thebes below the wall/And walked among the lowest of the dead' (243, 245-6). Looking back, one recalls how one's life has been torn asunder due to COVID. One can only speculate about the future. Like Thebes, the land is blighted by the virus. It waits to be redeemed by atonement. Some resort to prayer and incantation, others to propitiate strange gods, and still others to bow down before nature praying for deliverance.

It is indeed the 'Twilight of the Gods' i.e. the Gotterdammerung of Wagner's opera. It is the end of the world. The Rhine maidens, Woglinde, Wellgunde, and Flosshilde lament the loss of their gold, as a result of which the waters are impure. It is their signature "Weialala leia, wallala leialala" (277-8) from the opera (III: i), which Eliot imports into *The Waste Land.* The lisping utterance of loss evokes more than words can, for they return to a time before language was formed. The loss of gold is the loss of value in a COVID-stricken world. The universe desperately tried to heal itself by restoring some semblance of order.

The Israelites pining to return from their exile in Babylon is like the migrants and many others who were stranded in all parts of the world with no possibility of returning to their homeland as the borders were sealed due to the pandemic.

All of us strove to keep up the fig leaf of normalcy. We went through our routines, "The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights / her stove, and lays out food in tins" (222-3). Sex too is perfunctory during COVID. There is always the threat of infection. 'Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass: / "Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over"' (252).

IV. Death by Water

Death by water recalls the bodies flowing on the river like those on the Ganges when COVID was at its peak. The opening suggests bodies rotting from the pandemic. “Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,/forgot the cry of gulls and the sea swell/And the profit and loss” (311-13). Images of decomposed bodies drifting down the Ganga come to mind. (Pandey) The scale of the tragedy was unimaginable. People had nowhere to bury the bodies, or services to cremate them. So the bodies wound up in the river near the UP-Bihar border near Ballia. Everything else pales in comparison. Life lost its meaning seeing the human tragedy all around. All that could be done was to recall memories of the one who was felled: “Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you” (321). The nihilism is profound.

V. What the Thunder Said

Eliot summarises the pall of the gloom of the pandemic:

> After the agony in stony places
>
> the shouting and the crying
>
> Prison and palace and reverberation . . .
>
> He who was living is now dead
>
> We who were living are now dying
>
> With a little patience. (324-26, 328-30)

COVID spared no one. Neither the person in the prison nor the one in the palace was exempt. All the loved ones could do was watch from a distance, utterly helpless as a part of their soul was wrenched away into an abyss of no return.

The second verse is replete with images of aridity: “Here is no water but only rock” (331). Thunder is sterile and bereft of rain (342). “Words after speech reach into the silence,” wrote Eliot. *The Waste Land* comes to a magisterial close with “*Shantih, shantih, shantih*" (433). This acceptance, this quietude, is ushered in through an awareness of the cosmic

balance—the '*Om*' which subsumes all. Give, sympathize, control is the *mantra* to uplift civilization in crisis. In the context of COVID, countless people gave what they had to help the needy. One even airlifted his workers to their hometown in Bihar from Delhi when train routes were severed. Sympathy and empathy were not in short supply; control was demanded.

The Ganga is chosen ironically for the site of this regeneration — an indication of how far we have travelled these 100 years. Yet "In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing / over the tumbled graves. . . Dry bones can harm no one" (387).

Nothing is what it seems. Eliot leaves us with the unsettling images of hell depicted by Hieronymus Bosch. For many, COVID was hell. The ones who went away, never to return, perhaps had no time to put their affairs in order. The Biblical allusion is to King Hezekiah whom God warns to settle his affairs. (Is. 38.1) God relents and gives him 15 years more to live. Only a few were that lucky.

Conclusion

T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* is a metaphor for our time. Emerging from COVID-19, we see how the work is a palimpsest for the pandemic. Each section is intricately constructed to encompass the diverse experiences of the pandemic. In doing so, Eliot takes us through several artistic expressions which we are heir as well. Opera, the Bible, painting and music are some, to name a few. This paper has attempted to deconstruct the text and provide it with fresh meaning.

It has tried to decipher the metatext of the work. By shifting the dominant narrative of *The Waste Land* to see it as a palimpsest of the pandemic, this paper uses the same allusions to connote something entirely different. Doing this reiterates the endurance and timelessness of a classic 100 years later.

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"Mature Poets Steal": Voice, Appropriation, and *The Waste Land*

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Abstract: The multiplicity of voices, which enter T*he Waste Land,* and the conditions of modernity, which not only enabled, but demanded such heteroglossia, in modernist politics, have been widely noted and discussed, and has the influence of T*he Waste Land* on subsequent polyphonic long forms in Anglophone poetry through the following century. Newly established recording and playback technologies led to a dissociation of voice from the human subject as point of origin; it also a labelled new politics of voice appropriation, which the wasteland inaugurated, and which today's realise in more extreme appropriations of conceptual politics. The appropriative nature of modernist poetics was recognised by contemporary such as William Carlos Williams, who decried "the traditional is of plagiarism," as well as Eliot himself, who famously argued that "mature poets steal." Attending to the archival evidence of the poem's composition as well as Eliot's own voicings of the poem in audio recordings, my paper will consider T*he Waste Lands* appropriations in the light of what contemporary arguments concerning voice appropriation might say about Eliot's deployment of "voices" in the poem from different gender, class, and racial positions than his own.

Keywords: Poetics, Heteroglossia, Gender, Class, Race

This paper has its origins in teaching; specifically, in an assignment I developed several years ago which I call an "e-locution project." This project asks students to record themselves reading a poem, or sections of a poem, we are studying in class, and then write a paper discussing the interpretive decisions they made in their performance of the poem. We then listen to the various recordings in class when we turn to the poems, and the students who made the recordings share their findings and prompt discussion. In a class surveying 19th and 20th

century literatures in English, students who read from sections of *The Waste Land* inevitably commented in their papers on why they decided to "do the poem in different voices," to modify the poem's working title. More recently I deployed this e-locution assignment in a cross-listed senior undergraduate and graduate course on "Sounding Canadian Poetry," and asked students to complete the assignment on the work of contemporary poets, all of whom were BIPOC writers including M. NourBese Philip and Jordan Abel, both are well-known for their work in appropriative or citational poetics. I explicitly asked in the assignment that students consider questions of voice appropriation in their performances, or rather "deformances," following Jerome McGann and Lisa Samuels' concept[1]. Two graduate students, both of whom were white, refused to record themselves reading the poems by BIPOC writers over concerns around voice appropriation. As one student wrote in her paper, "this project requires the performance of a voice that does not align with my subject position, and in fact, is so radically disparate from my lived experience, that to embody that experience would be to inhabit a space that I am not meant to engage in" (Van Dyk 3). Their solution to this dilemma was to write poems themselves, employing the procedural process of the poets in question, and then record and discuss those poems. These different pedagogical experiences have led me to consider the question of voice appropriation in *The Waste Land* more specifically. While most contemporary readers of the poem, in an academic context or not, may not share the same anxieties over voice appropriation as the current generation of graduate students, the ethics of Eliot's deployment of voices in the poem from subject positions not his own does seem to me to be a question worth considering.

The multiplicity of voices which enter *The Waste Land*, and the conditions of modernity which not only enabled but demanded such heteroglossia in modernist poetics, have been widely noted and discussed, as has the influence of *The Waste Land* on subsequent polyphonic long forms in anglophone poetry through the century which has passed since its publication.

Jed Rasula, for instance, argues *The Waste Land* marked the emergence of a new concept of poetic "voice": rather than a single discernible, reliable "speaker" of a poem, "[t]here is, instead, a field of operations open (and exposed) to a spectrum of consciousness surpassing any putative individual perspective" (219). Rasula links the emergence of this poetics to the rapidly changing social conditions of modernity: "*The Waste Land* is a paradigmatic collage poem, published when collage in the visual arts was being recognized as reflecting a natural aptitude of the harried metropolitan citizen: perception in a state of distraction, Walter Benjamin called it" (220). Although Rasula insists Eliot "was not a conceptualist like Marcel Duchamp, much as he too wrangled 'found' objects" and that "*The Waste Land* is not, to poetry, what Duchamp's urinal bearing the signature R. Mutt is to visual art. Eliot's *findings* are integrated into an overall composition" (219-220), I contend that *The Waste Land*, along with Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, inaugurated a poetics of citation and appropriation that today extends to the more extreme appropriations of conceptual poetics as represented by the work of U.S. poet Kenneth Goldsmith, for example[2]. Marjorie Perloff notes that literary and art historians have placed Eliot and Duchamp "at opposite poles of the modernist aesthetic," with Eliot as an "elitist poet who believed in the autonomy of the work of art" and Duchamp as "a Dadaist iconoclast whose object was to demolish the very notion of the 'art work' and break down the distinction between 'art' and 'life' (177). Perloff counters by suggesting Eliot and Duchamp share more similarities than might be supposed in terms of their understanding of the autonomy of art and the diminishment of the significance of an author's biography to the meaning of the work, but I hope to demonstrate how Eliot's citational poetics do, in fact, parallel Duchamp's "readymades" and his use of *objet trouvé.* It is "appropriate," for instance, that Perloff opens her 2010 study of citational poetics *Unoriginal Genius: Poetry By Other Means in the New Century* with a brief discussion of *The Waste Land*; more specifically, Edgell Rickword's 1923 review of the poem for the *Times Literary Supplement*, in which he

"expressed admiration for Eliot's 'sophistication' but could not condone *The Waste Land*'s extensive use of citation" (Perloff).

That the citation of different sources, styles, and voices would be among *The Waste Land*'s most significant legacies for 21st century poetics should not be surprising, given the poem's working title *He Do the Police in Different Voices*, itself a citation from another literary source: an excerpt of dialogue spoken by the character Betty Higden in Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*, and differentiated as a unique voice by the grammatical disagreement between subject and verb in the first two words which marks Betty's lower class position. The appropriative nature of modernist poetics was recognized by Eliot himself, who famously argued that "mature poets steal" (125), as well as contemporaries such as William Carlos Williams, who decried "The Traditionalists of Plagiarism" with Eliot in mind in *Spring and All*, published the same year as *The Waste Land* (Williams 10). Indeed, Eliot reflected in 1956 that he had included the references in the later printing of the poem as an effort to forestall such accusations: "I had at first intended only to put down all the references for my quotations, with a view to spiking the guns of critics of my earlier poems who had accused me of plagiarism" (Eliot 533). This collision of a deployment of multiple voices of alterity with a poetics of appropriation raises a question: how might we read *The Waste Land*'s appropriations in light of contemporary arguments concerning voice appropriation, and what such arguments might say about Eliot's deployment of "voices" in the poem from different gender, class, and racial positions than his own? This seems especially urgent given contemporary misgivings about Eliot's gender and racial politics, as discussed at length, for example, in a recent forum in *Modernism/Modernity* organized by Megan Quigley on #metoo, Eliot, and Modernist scholarship, in which Quigley writes, "Eliot's posthumously published racist verses…may be reason enough to topple his still-towering status." Some contemporary positions may regard the voices of others, "So rudely forced" (100) into the poem by a white,

middle-class, male poet, as "inviolable" as the voice of Philomel's nightingale filling the desert (101). But I am less concerned with condemning work written a century ago based on values and concerns of the present, than with inquiring into how this foundational document of modernism inaugurates an appropriative practice which Delmore Schwartz in 1954 described as the "method of the sibylline or subliminal listener," a method which would appear "to be no method at all precisely because it is the method which permits all other methods to be used freely and without predetermination; and which allows no particular method to interfere with the quintessential receptivity which opens itself to any and all kinds of material and subject matter" (Schwartz 237).

Consider the wider context of Eliot's famous observation from his essay on Philip Massinger:

> One of the surest of tests is the way in which a poet borrows. Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different. The good poet welds his theft into a whole feeling which is unique, utterly different from that from which it was torn; the bad poet throws it into something which has no cohesion. (125)

Eliot here is considering the work of other writers from which both immature and mature, bad and good poets borrow, rather than the "voices" which are my focus here. But the intertextual matrix that he alludes to is capacious enough to contain all; what matters is Eliot's emphasis on the responsible use of such appropriations. He acknowledges that such a recontextualization of voices can be done poorly or irresponsibly, and he recognizes the disjunctive power of these recontextualizations. Moreover, in a 1919 *Athenaeum* review of Edmond Rostand's *Vol de la Marseillaise*, contemporary with the composition of *The Waste Land*, Eliot would make a case for polyphony: "if we are to express ourselves, our variety of

thoughts and feelings, on a variety of subjects with inevitable rightness, we must adapt our manner to the moment with infinite variations" (Eliot 665). Here, Eliot makes a case for a polyphony of styles in order to authentically express individual subjectivity; in *The Waste Land*, Eliot would employ "infinite variations" in order to authentically express collectivity. As Rasula puts it, "If a whole city could speak all at once, it would be omnianonymous—or so we learn by reading Joyce, and even more distinctly by reading *The Waste Land*" (Rasula 20).

In her recent book *Appropriate: A Provocation*, an intervention into contemporary debates about voice appropriation, Paisley Rekdal describes the method of *The Waste Land* as "appropriate[ing] the language of a variety of texts by collaging them into a new but unified work" (Rekdal 20), and suggests the poem is an example of literary "adaptation" rather than appropriation. Building upon the argument of critic Julie Sanders in her book *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Rekdal argues "[a]ppropriation may be part of adaptation, but while they are similar, the two are different from each other based upon the degree of difference from their original source" (21). Rekdal's argument is not "worried about artistic influence or postmodern collage or adaptation so much as about what constitutes cultural appropriation" (22); in other words, the decision of some writers to write from imagined identity positions—especially racialized and/or gendered positions—not their own. In their introduction to the collection *The Racial Imaginary: Writers on Race in the Life of the Mind*, Claudia Rankine and Beth Loffreda argue that we must shift our thinking about cultural appropriation in terms of rights to thinking about it in terms of desire:

> Are we saying that Asian writers can't write Latino characters? That white writers can't write black characters? That no one can write from a different racial other's point of view? We're saying we'd like to change the terms of that conversation, to think about creativity and the imagination without

> employing the language of rights and the sometimes concealing terms of craft. To ask some first-principle questions instead. So not: can I write from another's point of view? But instead: to ask why and what for, not just if and how? What is the charisma of what I feel estranged from, and why might I wish to enter and inhabit it? To speak not in terms of prohibition and rights, but desire. (Rankine and Loffreda 17-18)

From this perspective, and perhaps paradoxically, Eliot's deployment of the voices of alterity in *The Waste Land*, voices Shwartz insisted in 1954 that "the poet has listened to and quoted and recorded" (235), constitutes less of an objectionable appropriation from a contemporary perspective than imagining such voices out of whole cloth.

When considering the question of voice appropriation in *The Waste Land*, I focus on the "voices" that are most clearly removed from Eliot's own subject position, namely, working-class voices, women's voices, and the Hindu references and chants in "What the Thunder Said." To me, these latter elements operate in the poem as signs of alterity, the fragments of Sanskrit shored against the ruins of Western civilization the poem otherwise documents. A. David Moody asserts that "a recognition of differences, Eliot would maintain, is the necessary basis for any genuine cross-cultural understanding" (Moody 19). Moody proceeds to absolve Eliot of any accusations of cultural appropriation in his poetic texts:

> Such recognition is also one necessary safeguard against the Western tendency, so thoroughly exposed by Edward Said in his *Orientalism*, to appropriate Eastern cultures and make of them something all our own. In Eliot's poetry the Upanishads, and the *Geeta* especially, are not Westernised—their function in the poetry is precisely to represent a non-Western and wholly other tradition. Nor to my sense are they exoticised, attended to simply for their strangeness and curiosity-value. For they

> introduce into Eliot's 'European' poetry a primitive wisdom which he found still valid, though superseded, for him, in the Christian revelation. He turned to it, in *The Waste Land* and *The Dry Salvages*, as a way of reapproaching and rediscovering the basis of a Christian vision for a secularised Western society. (19)

The Sanskrit words which close the poem are granted prominence in the text by virtue of concluding it. They also occur as the culmination of a kaleidoscopic vortex of different languages, as a frantic culmination of the poem's heteroglossia. Listening to Eliot read these lines, we can hear him modulate his voice, in one of the few times in his recordings, to emphasise the irreducible difference—what Leonard Diepeveen calls "the aggressively individual texture" (124)—of this language. In a different and intriguing reading, Henry Michael Gott suggests of the closing Sanskit chants that "[t]he pleas made by the consciousness of Eliot's poem tend to be elucidative of a relationship not only between human and divine but also between the text and other texts. As quotations they address themselves not only to the divine object of their original context, but also to literary tradition—tying expressly the protagonist's crisis of faith to the artist's dearth of inspiration" (89). The rich, and in fact potentially infinite matrix from which the poet may draw his citations paradoxically suggests not a plenitude of reference but its diminishment. Eliot's citational poetics throughout the poem, then, extending Gott's reading, reflect the sterile and barren waste land of an inescapable intertextual condition, in which the citational form of the poem supports its thematic emphases on cultural decline and impoverishment.

Michael Levenson has observed that "the concept of voice remains notoriously elusive, largely because it bears the burden of so many interests" (Levenson 87) and suggests "we might better speak of 'voicing' rather than 'voice' in the poem, since the acts of speech pass too quickly to establish any stable personhood" (90). One of the challenges in discussing voice

in *The Waste Land* are the often indeterminate distinctions between the various voices. In a 1971 essay, Paul LaChance attempts to discern and describe all the voices in the poem, eventually acknowledging "it seems impossible (and probably not worthwhile) to nail down every voice" (112). More recently, a team of computer scientists and a literary scholar at the University of Toronto attempted to use computer-assisted quantitative analysis to distinguish stylistically all the voices in the poem, while acknowledging that although the stylistic contrasts between voices are often clear to many readers, "Eliot does not explicitly mark the transitions, nor is it clear when a voice has reappeared" (Brooke et al 41). The transition from the narrating voice which opens the poem and that of Marie at the beginning of "The Burial of the Dead," for instance, demonstrates how the voices in the poem as often bleed into each other as not. The evident transition from narrating voice to Marie occurs at line 8: "Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee / With a shower of rain." The transition here is marked by an extension of the line which continues for the rest of the stanza—a visual cue that would likely be missed in a hearing rather than a reading of the poem—as well as the reference to "Starnbergersee," which situates the voice in a particular place as opposed to the more general northern, temperate milieu of the poem's opening lines. Yet the observation "Summer surprised us" directly echoes and contrasts with "Winter kept us warm" in the narrating voice, suggesting continuity as well as difference. And we don't discover the gender of the second voice until the reported speech of the arch-duke calling the recollecting speaker Marie: a figure based, according to the newly available letters of Eliot to Emily Hale, on a real person, Marie von Moritz, whom Eliot "had befriended in the summer of 1911 in Munich" (Rogers) and whose recollections, Eliot told Hale, he reproduced "almost word for word" in the poem (Gordon 27). Eliot himself acknowledges the at times lack of clear distinctions between voices in the poem in one of its notes: "Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand

Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias" (Eliot 70).

As is often the case, Eliot's note is misleading if not simply mistaken. Levenson argues:

> The speech of women constitutes an original voice in *The Waste Land.* And the primal failures of sexuality, its inhibitions as well as its violence, are the recurrent topic of these micro-scenarios. Women who have been stymied and degraded ("It's them pills I took, to bring it off"), or trapped in empty erotic tedium ("that's done"), or lost within marriage ("My nerves are bad tonight") speak within the pattern Eliot articulates in the *Hamlet* essay; that is, as if their words were "automatically released" by the brief narrative sequences that contain them. The references to past texts and episodes prepare the scene for the moments of cry and call; tradition provides an orchestral surrounding for the searing solitary voices. (92-93)

Far from blending into a universal voice of Woman, the feminine voices in the poem are the most individuated—and their utterances are usually made in a context in which communication is frustrated, with no reply from an interlocutor. Yet despite this individuation, the citation of women's voices goes entirely uncited, in contrast to the "Notes" provided by Eliot to the poem: all of which, with the exception of Jessie L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, cite male authors (including the Biblical references). The question of the ethics of voice appropriation, then, weighs heavily on how we might read *The Waste Land* from a feminist perspective. In both foregrounding and frustrating feminine voices in the poem, Eliot intuits the problems of speaking for others.

Eliot's own voicings of *The Waste Land*, captured on various recordings in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, suggest that he did not regard the cacophony of voices comprising his poem to be necessarily differentiated. In the 1946 Library of Congress recording, Eliot reads

the entire poem, with the exception of the "nerves" sequence and the pub conversation in "A Game of Chess," in the consistent tone of his "austere public readings" (Gordon 103)—what Jason Camlot calls Eliot's "robotic liturgical voice"—a voicing we might hear as an oral embodiment of "dear Mrs Equitone" (57) from "The Burial of the Dead." Recent scholarship, however, suggests that the 1946 recording actually consists of selections from a number of different takes Eliot made of himself reading the poem in 1933 under the auspices of the "Speech Lab" at Columbia University. Richard Swigg has noted the differences between many of the 1933 recordings and the 1946 recording, in which Eliot reads in the earlier recordings with more "passion and urgency" (Swigg 39), similar to Virginia Woolf's recollection of hearing Eliot read the poem in a private setting, six months before its publication: "He sang it & chanted it[,] rhythmed it. It has great beauty & force of phrase: symmetry; & tensity" (Woolf 178). Jason Camlot suggests that the 1946 recording, parts of which sound identical to some of the 1933 takes, "is most likely an edited fusion of the 'best' takes…recorded in 1933" (Camelot 144). Rather than a spontaneous reading, then, the 1946 version was constructed quite deliberately by Eliot as a composition of his own "voicings" of the poem—a method of construction analogous to his composition of the poem itself from many voices. Camelot further suggests that "[i]n experimenting in his performance of *The Waste Land*, Eliot worked to figure out how to speak in a voice that did not emanate from a person but from something that captured the nature and import of the medium with which he was engaged. (Camelot 154) and that:

> [a]lthough there are obviously different voices to be done in *The Waste Land*, much of the experimentation in the various takes of the 1933 recordings has less to do with sounding the individuated voices of characters in the poem—less to do with *doing* voices—than with sounding the correct tempo, pitch, and incantatory rhythm that would best allow the variety of voices already

> written into the poem to cohere as a vocalised movement of poetic composition. (Camelot 158)

That is to say, Eliot's constructed recording works to efface the distinctions between and particularities of the poem's voices, emphasising their absorption into a coherent whole[4].

Audio recordings, moreover, impacted the poem's composition as well as its reception, in helping establish the conditions for the poetics of appropriated voices. In the early 20th century, I would argue, newly-established recording and playback technologies led to a dissociation of voice from the human subject as point of origin, in a manner analogous to Walter Benjamin's observations concerning the impact of mechanical reproduction on the "aura" of a work of art. Benjamin, of course, viewed this development with optimism, as undermining the authority of tradition which he sees as aligned with fascism, and instead supporting a collective politics: "To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose 'sense of the universal equality of things' has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction" (223). Reproductive audio technologies forever undermine and destabilise notions of ownership and authenticity of voice, enabling a citational poetics which *The Waste Land* helps establish. At the same time, the poem recognizes such impacts of technology on ideas of human individuality. Consider the scene between the typist and clerk in "The Fire Sermon," for instance, a scene which renders their sexual encounter in terms suggestive of both sexual assault and triviality. After the departure of the "young man carbuncular" (231),

> the typist turns and looks a moment in the glass,
> Hardly aware of her departed lover;
> Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass;
> 'Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over.'
> When a lovely woman stoops to folly and

> Paces about her room again, alone,
>
> She smooths her hair with automatic hand,
>
> And puts a record on the gramophone. (249-256)

"Her brain" is dissociated from the typist herself, allowing or disallowing thoughts to pass. The "automatic hand" with which she smooths her hair becomes associated by proximity with the automation of the gramophone in the following line. In her solitude, recorded and technologically-mediated voices replace those of another human, such as the departed lover.

While at times Eliot uses "substandard English" grammatical constructions and phonetic spelling to distinguish voices in the poem, notably in the pub conversation which concludes "A Game of Chess," the manuscript notes suggest he was conflicted on this question. The facsimile and transcript of the poem, which includes Eliot's, Vivien's, and Pound's annotations and notes, shows that Vivien had suggested changing the "g" to "k" in "something" in the line "'Something of that,' I said" (Eliot 13). In response to this suggestion, Eliot wrote, "I want to avoid trying to show pronunciation by spelling" (13). Yet the edits to the concluding lines show that line 170 was initially written "Good night, Bill. Good night, Lou. Good night, George. Good night," but the concluding "d" in each "Good" were stricken—at Vivien's suggestion, according to Lyndall Gordon (93)—in order to render the inebriated woman's slurred speech as she left the pub. This is also a line which Eliot reads more dramatically in the 1946 recording to emphasize the woman's slurring. Matthew Hollis cites Osbert Sitwell as suggesting Eliot drew these lines from speech overheard out his Marylebone window:

> The apartment overlooked the boisterous Laurie Arms (now Larrik) public house in what Vivien described as 'a little noisy corner, with slums and low streets and poor shops close around.' The noise would bother the Eliots. When Osbert Sitwell visited the flat, he reported that the neighbours below

> were two 'actresses' who spent the evenings singing around the piano or playing the gramophone loudly or hollering down into the small hours to 'gentlemen friends' in the street below. Eliot when he complained was given a patient explanation by the landlord: 'Well, you see, Sir, it's the Artistic Temperament.' Osbert Sitwell would later say that in the calls of the 'actresses' and the response from the street he could hear the voices of *The Waste Land.* (Hollis 27)

Sitwell's report supports Delmore Schwartz's idea that Eliot is not so much inventing many of the voices in *The Waste Land* as citing voices he hears, or indeed overhears. According to a note on this passage in the 1971 facsimile edition of the poem edited by Valerie Eliot, "Eliot said this passage was 'pure Ellen Kellond,' a maid employed by the Eliot's, who recounted it to them" (127).

Perhaps voice appropriation is more acceptable in a text with many voices: it renders all voices constructions, fictions, rather than an articulation of essential identities. Eliot does not appropriate to himself the authority of any one voice because the poem doesn't establish any one voice as authoritative, *pace* LaChance's assertion that "[i]f the many disparate voices suggest the universality of *The Waste Land* condition, the first voice which opened the poem and maintains throughout the poem its central mood or dominant tone suggests the poem's only hope" (LaChance 111). The question of voice appropriation may ultimately turn on another question that has been debated far longer: is *The Waste Land* best understood as an apogee of high Modernism or as proto-postmodern? If, as Michael Coyle persuasively argues, Eliot in *The Waste Land* is writing pastiche, then is voice appropriation even possible in the "speech in a dead language" of pastiche, in Fredric Jameson's phrase? (Jameson 17). Consider the occasions in the poem in which the voices Eliot deploys are themselves reported speech, such as the pub monologue, or the layerings of the echo of Ziegfeld's follies' "That

Shakesperian Rag," a song "without the slightest traces of ragtime" (Coyle 122). As Coyle puts it, "[f]unctioning as neither parody nor allusion, pastiche in *The Waste Land* summons historical difference and hermeneutic ambiguity without offering grounding for either" (123). Ultimately, I don't think we can accuse *The Waste Land* of committing the ethical breach of voice appropriation for the simple fact that it is difficult to attribute any voice in the poem to Eliot himself; as Diepeveen notes, "the central voice of *The Waste Land* is not so much replaced as it is muffled. This finding and losing is the voice of *The Waste Land*" (Diepeveen 126). When I was considering submitting a proposal to present at the conference at which this paper was first presented, I wasn't sure I would be able to say anything new about *The Waste Land*, one of the most exhaustively discussed texts not just of the 20th century but of all periods. My despair at saying anything new about *The Waste Land* was perhaps a belated echo of Eliot's despair in 1922 of saying anything new at all.

Endnotes

1. Lisa Samuels and Jerome J. McGann, "Deformance and Interpretation." *New Literary History* Vol. 30, No. 1, 1999, pp. 25-56.
2. Goldsmith himself does not acknowledge Eliot as a precursor in his essay "Why Appropriation?", though he does cite as influences "the constructive methodology of Ezra Pound's *Cantos* and the scrivenerlike process of Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*" (Goldsmith 112)
3. Rasula estimates "a plausible count of sixty-six" voices in the poem (219).
4. The reading voice and recordings of such readings were not insignificant to Eliot. In his essay "The Frontiers of Criticism" (1956), he writes of *Finnegans Wake* that "large stretches of it are…merely beautiful nonsense (very beautiful indeed when recited by an Irish voice as lovely as that of the author—would that he had recorded more of it!)" (533-34)

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Reading Banksy's Street Art through the Verses of *The Waste Land*

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Abstract: Though it has been a century since T.S. Eliot's creation of *The Waste Land*, it is still immensely alive because its meaning is getting new momentum in almost every part of the current global world. The society Eliot meticulously portrayed in this masterpiece is perhaps relevant now, more than ever. Pop culture of the present day like street art often demonstrates the traits which were repeatedly mentioned in the poem. This paper aims to read one of the most controversial street artists, Banksy's artworks through the depiction of Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Banksy's career started in the early 1990s as a graffiti artist, soon his artworks on the walls of London begin to reveal the conditions of contemporary disillusioned society, hopelessness, alienation, and a poignant emptiness. Over the decades, Banksy's work is becoming more biting and bitter. Even though Eliot's *The Waste Land* precisely talks about modernity, and Banksy's work pulsates with postmodernity, a wide range of Banksy's work can be interpreted through Eliot's verses. This paper reflects on those common threads along with the nuanced meanings of the verses of T*he Waste Land* and Banksy's street art.

Keywords: *The Waste Land*, Banksy, Street art, City space, Images

2022 is the year when T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* completes its century. As a centenarian, *The Waste Land* has been through the horrors of the two world wars, nuclear weapons, the cold war, refugee crises, the rise of nationalism, postcolonialism, decolonialism, and many more. Unusual as it may seem but Eliot's *The Waste Land* has managed to maintain a consistent relevance throughout these events and keeps continuing its journey as a celebrated classic in academia and the English literary arena. This literary masterpiece enjoyed its

stardom in the rise of modernism and keeps a steady hold on the postmodern era as well. *The Waste Land* is predominantly a commentary on urban space with a masquerade of characters from classics around the world. This paper takes street art, a prominent urban subculture of the postmodern era, and reads a number of street art through the verses of Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Since the genre of street art has a wider variety in art history, in order to narrow down the focus of the paper, I have chosen Banksy, one of the most controversial as well as celebrated street artists of the present times. Another reason for choosing Banksy is, his street arts predominantly appear on the walls of urban London with the commentary on contemporary social inequalities and *The Waste Land'*s backdrop is also primarily urban London. The aim of this paper is thus to go through several of Banksy's street art and show the striking relevance of Eliot's centenarian verse through those pieces of art.

Eliot and His Conservatism

In 1928, in one of his essays, Eliot identifies himself as "classical in literature, royalist in politics, and Anglo-Catholic in religion" (Scruton). Throughout the century critics have pointed out Eliot's conservatism and elitism and the surprising combination of these two traits with his modernism (Asher 20) (Kaveney 20) (Kimball). While juxtaposing Eliot's *The Waste Land* with Banksy's deviating street art, I am well aware of the opposites of their ideologies but there lies the beauty of intertextuality where art exists in the realm of previous works of art despite having no common threads between the artists. Therefore, it is rather ironic that a lot of the stories stenciled by Banksy are found in the verses of *The Waste Land* which is written by a renowned conservative like Eliot, whereas Banksy's ideology is completely anti-establishment, and radical.

Street Art and Banksy

Art historians suggest that street art is an evolved form of graffiti. The difference between graffiti and street art is that street art focuses on messages through artistic expression while

graffiti is only text-driven. The term street art was coined in 1985 by Allen Schwartzman (Rudolph 4) and it became popularised in the late 1980s. According to Jeffrey Ian Ross, "street art refers to stencils, stickers, and noncommercial images/posters that are affixed to surfaces and objects (e.g., mailboxes, garbage cans, street signs) where the owner of the property has not permitted the perpetrator" (Ross 1). As the definition suggests, street art is a piece of art done without the permission of the property owner, therefore goes through the question of legitimacy in the legal sense and there is a tendency to label this form of art as an act of vandalism by the dominant culture. Ross' definition also points to the fact that street art is a piece of art to which anyone has the access to the art which exercises a sense of democracy of creativity.

In her lecture series, Professor Rudolf emphasises how the location of street art is more important for a street artist than a graffiti artist because in often cases street art is a commentary on the contemporary world/politics/national crises. It is usually an urban expression of art, meaning the artists use the urban walls/urban mailboxes/street signs as their canvases in order to reach as many audiences as possible. Most celebrated street artists often choose the walls /public places of cosmopolitan cities like New York, Paris, Berlin, and London. Alison Young, in her book quoted Eine and emphasises, "(London) is the hub … the mecca for street art" (Young 80), and one of the factors that make London "the hub" is its proximity to Bristol because "Bristol is a more accurate point of origin for street art in Britain given that it is the home of Banksy…" (ibid).

Banksy is perhaps the most celebrated street artist whose work is applauded in the mainstream art network as well. He is extremely controversial for his ostentatious display of sardonic attitude towards high culture, upper class, commodity culture, capitalism, and war mongering psyche of the developed nations. Interestingly, the name Banksy is a pseudonym

and even though he has written several books, screenplays, and directed a few documentaries, he has successfully masked his identity, and no one, to date, has managed to reveal his identity.

Juxtaposing Banksy and *The Waste Land*

This paper brings in a number of Banksy's artworks that reverberates the images of Eliot's *The Waste Land*. One of the salient features of *The Waste Land* is its disjointed masquerade of images which is in Eliot's own terms "(a) heap of broken images" (T.S. Eliot), the images of this poetry are thus fragmented, and shattered in pieces, peeping through the sections of this lucid poetry. Likewise, the street arts of Banksy echo a disjointed aura, ruptured by the geographic borders, cityscapes, and alleys of the urban areas of metropolises because his artworks are founded in the cities of Britain, the USA, Palestine, Ukraine and many more.

My reading of Banksy is not complete without T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* because it is more relevant than ever with its montage of images and politics of urban spaces. We are now ever more connected through the advent of social media but perhaps we are now more disconnected than ever. Each of these artworks tells a story of oppression/satire and or critique of the contemporary socio-political atmosphere. *The Waste Land* and Banksy's street art exudes an apocalyptic aura where there is a disquieting sense. The constant feeling of hopelessness, fragmented life, and lack of cohesion resonates and recurs several times in the lines where Eliot writes:

> … Son of man.
> You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
> A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
> And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
> And the dry stone no sound of water. ("The Burial of the Dead" 20-24)

There are a number of Banksy's artworks that reflects on the same bleakness, dreams being shattered, and arid land where hopes slip out of the hands (fig.2), flowers wilted in the hand of the beloved (fig.1):

Fig 1: On the shutter of the Larry Flynt's Hustler Club, New York

Fig 2: Girl with a Red Balloon at South Bank, London

The dreams have withered and there is no hope in Eliot's *wasteland*, everything reeks of nothingness, whereas Banksy has also portrayed the same in his artwork where all the dreams are being brushed away with the reality:

Fig 3: Chintaown, Boston

Through the verses and the artworks above, it is evident that the social commentary of dejected life, and infertile landscape is still relevant after 100 years. I will emphasise this theme of the alienated, lonely life of the cityscape in the following section of the article. Lack of communication and inability to communicate is another frequent of *The Waste Land* where Eliot writes:

> I can connect
>
> Nothing with nothing. ("The fire Sermon" 301-302)

The inability to connect and communicate with each other hits hard at the core of modernity especially after WWI when the entire human civilization experienced the mass destruction of trust, faith, and humaneness for the first time through the horror of the war. This incapacity to connect and create a human connection becomes more poignant with the advancement of time, and the alienation becomes more obvious. One of Banksy's sculptures at Soho Square in London is a twisted phone booth, which is struck hard at its heart with a pick axe and is

bleeding from its wound. This iconic sculpture can be read as a vivid spectacle of the current inability to communicate where nothing makes sense anymore and communication mediums are ultimately destined to be a wounded failure.

In Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the image of the river Thames is an exhausting portrayal of the aftermath of war, and intense industrialization, where:

> The river sweats
>
> Oil and tar
>
> The barges drift
>
> With the turning tide ("The Fire Sermon" 266-278)

Fig 4: Soho Square, London

In 2005, in one of his exhibitions of Banksy, the audience get to see Banksy's appropriation of Claude Monet's masterpiece "Water Lilies and Japanese Bridge". Banksy remakes the entire art piece with two abandoned shopping trolleys and one traffic cone submerged in the lily pond.

Fig 5: “Show Me the Monet”

This appropriation is a dig at the ever-growing consumer culture of wanting more, never satiated consumer psyche which can be metaphorically juxtaposed with the river that “sweats oil and tar”. Both Eliot and Banksy thus show the degeneration of the water bodies with the deterioration of human civilization. The despair and the disjointed relationships are inflicted on the rivers and lakes, thus nature fails to ameliorate the human condition. Nature is, therefore, no longer a place to offer respite or tranquillity of mind.

With the dystopian urban imagery weaved by Eliot, one obvious imagery that creeps up in poetry is that of rats. In the third part of *The Waste Land* Eliot has mentioned the movement of rats in the sewer-strewn alleys of London, where the cityscape seems “unreal” and under the spell of a “brown fog of a winter dawn”. Interestingly, rats have been copiously used by Banksy in his street art partly because he started his career with the admiration of Blek Le Rat (“Banksy Street Art - Most Famous Work”) who is a notable French graffiti artist

and has been using rats as one his main motifs of artworks. Rats are an essential motif of any dystopian urbanscapes and Banksy has masterfully used this motif to rupture the make-believe world of the city dwellers. While mentioning his fascination with rats as a recurring motif in his artworks, Banksy says, "I have been painting rats for three years before someone said 'that's clever. It's an anagram of art' and I had to pretend I'd known that all along" (Banksy 89).

Followings are some of the curious takes on rats being used as pieces of street art:

Fig 6 : Paris, France

This street art depicts two rats holding hands together and roaming the streets of Paris. Apparently, one of them is female and the other one is male where the female rat is holding a fancy pointed umbrella and the male rat is wearing a bowler hat and holding a stick in one hand. This is a satire on the fancy upper-class tourists who roam around the streets of Paris.

The second one presented here in this article is showing an office-going rat with an umbrella and briefcase, which is once again a typical sight of any city where most dwellers have a mundane 9 am-5 pm job in order to maintain sustenance.

Fig 7: Pitfield Street, Hoxton

There are numerous instances of Banksy's artworks with rats in the cityscapes that portray the usual human affairs like wearing a tuxedo and holding the door for a red-carpet event or dumping toxic liquid all over the place, all these portrayals suggest as if the city is infested with rats while the rats doing the exact same things as humans are doing.

Fig 8: At the corner of the Curtain Road and Christina Street, London

Fig 9: Oliver's Yard, London

The last artwork of a rat I am using is where Banksy has stenciled a rat inside an upcycled clock near the Empire State Building, in New York. This artwork powerfully represents the fact humankind is stuck in this endless race against time which will ultimately bring nothing but futility.

Fig 10: Croydon, New York.

To reinforce this idea of race, in one of his books, *Wall and Piece*, Banksy mentions "You can win the race but you're still a rat" (Banksy 91). By saying so, this street artist indicates the fact of modern humans' tendency of running a rat race throughout the entire life which makes the cities "unreal", and brings nothing but a sheer of void and failure. This combination of human exhaustion and sense of meaninglessness constantly flow through the verses of *The Waste Land* as well.

In the last part of my paper, I will bring a parallelism between how Eliot's last section of *The Waste Land* resonates with one of Banksy's Street arts where both of them have spoken ambiguously regarding the concept of *shantih* (peace) and solace. While Eliot is wrapping up his masterpiece with the chanting of *Shantih shantih shantih*, Banksy seems to layer the theme of *shantih* and has gone to another level with his sardonic attitude to depict the contemporary context of *shantih* or peace.

The following artwork is done by Banksy on a wall in Bethlehem, Palestine. The symbol of dove is universally acknowledged as a symbol of peace and hope. Banksy tweaks the concept of this symbol and makes an armoured dove, with apparently an olive leaf on its beak. But, this full-winged dove is also targeted for shooting that suggests its impending murder by the Israeli soldiers. This shows the brilliance of Banksy who not only problematizes the concept of peace in the current political context but also layers this work with symbols. Through this artwork, Banksy not only questions the concept of *shantih/* peace, but he also engages with the space of that particular wall of Bethlehem with his anti-war conscience.

Fig 11: Bethlehem, Palestine (Banksy and Ryszawa)

The reason for choosing this particular piece of artwork at the end of my paper is that Eliot's concept of a peaceful future is as enigmatic as this portrayal of Banksy's peace where none of them doesn't give away a concrete formula of attaining *shantih*, though Eliot makes a subtle suggestion of attaining it, Banksy forfeits the idea of peace by adding layers of symbols to the universal symbol of peace. The stories of incapacity, disconnection, and losing hope, therefore, are still at the backdrop of their works.

Conclusion

In one of his most celebrated essays, "Tradition and Individual Talent" Eliot says:

> No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead … The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. (37)

Reading Banksy's work through the verses of *The Waste Land*, therefore, in a way thus becomes a task that Eliot himself has endorsed in his essay. The specific pieces that I have

chosen for this paper can very well be read as a companion to Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Though the connection between poetry and paintings is quite common, the connection between poetry and street art is not usually seen in academia.

This might sound radical to compare one of the controversial artist's arts with one of the cannons of the literary world, but in this era of enmeshed identities where interpersonal communications and human connections are blurred with the dominance of technology, each person is alienated from her/his own identity, the idea of self is suspended from the reality, and the world is at constant anxiety of an impending war, masterpieces like *The Waste Land* requires to be re-read side by side with the contemporary sub-cultures that are subverting the mainstream narratives and critiquing on the socio-political narratives of the ruling forces by creating spaces in the concrete jungle of the urbanscapes. Such readings will open up discussions on the intertextuality and thus bring in a Bakhtinian carnivalesque narrative on a classic like *The Waste Land.*

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"These Emotional Experiences/Do Not Hold Good": Remembering Wagner in *The Waste Land*

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Abstract: This essay asks why so much Wagner has run aground in *The Waste Land*. Although the scope, style, and emotional range of their artistic projects might appear wildly at odds, Wagner and T.S. Eliot shared preoccupations with voice and memory, which produced receptions in some ways comparable. Investigating *The Waste Land*'s desiccated Wagnerian inscriptions, it explores the poem's uses of Wagner, apparently so distanced from music and feeling. Since simultaneous fragmentation and over-saturation were already a part of the Wagnerian experience, audiences might come upon these fragments in comparable ways and traces a series of responses in different audiences, from George Eliot and Verlaine to Bergson and Nietzsche. Considering music's intimate philosophical connections to emotion and memory, it finds that by examining half-hearings and re-readings and moments of suppressed distanced recall of music's emotional connections, the poem cannot help but remember.

Keywords: Wagnerism, Music, Modernism, The Waste Land, Voice, Memory

We had better face it: weirdly, Wagner sounds silently through *The Waste Land*. It is disconcerting, even concerning, to find Wagner's art sluiced up from the wellsprings of Romantic expressivity in the characteristic art of the nineteenth century, only to run dry amidst such austere deserted verbal modernism. These artworks exist on different dimensions, incommensurate in size and medium, if not totalizing ambition. Why is Wagner's expanse of endless melodies so intimate yet truncated a part of T.S. Eliot's poem?

There are sound reasons for the poem, including Wagner: literally so. The most obvious fact is that the poem emerges from a milieu saturated with Wagner: any poem

navigating the cultural detritus of the nineteenth century is bound to find some Wagner washed up alongside. Their work shares concerns about audience, voice, dreams, difficulty, memory—and a long trail of scholarship. Nevertheless, it is also true that, however tacitly, the poem's Wagnerian words and syllable sounds gesture to sound's possibility, and thus to an idea of music and all its traditional appeal to emotion (which led Plato to restrict music from his *Republic*). Perhaps no music has ever striven so hard for emotional impact than Wagner's: and none of his operas for more emotional impact than *Tristan und Isolde*, a quotation from which marks the first italicised, indented and thus significant foreign intervention into the text of *The Waste Land*.

Wagner's emotional appeal had always faced resistance: another Eliot, George, commented, "*Lohengrin* to us ordinary mortals seemed something like the whistling of the wind through the keyholes of a cathedral". Nevertheless, she, too, retained "a real desire to hear [the operas] again" (Sutcliffe 317). According to Frances Dickey, T.S. Eliot's attitude to Wagner was characterized by anxiety and ambivalence (201). His close friend Jean Verdenal also contended with Wagner's emotional register:

> Music goes more directly to the core of my being, and I have been listening to it quite a lot recently (still mainly Wagner). I am beginning to get the hand of The Ring. The obscure passages take on meaning each time the plot becomes more apparent. Tristan und Isolde is terribly moving at first hearing and leaves you prostrate with ecstasy and thirsting to return to it again. However, it is all so confused and complicated and impossible to put into words, and necessarily so (otherwise, no one would have felt the need to express it in music). (Eliot 28-31)

Altogether these responses raise more questions. How could such proverbial but bewildering emotional intensity be expressed in words, in fragments? Did T.S. Eliot resist, succumb, or

both? Should we imagine the familiar figure of an ironic, detached, sceptical Eliot shadowed by a committed, entranced, emotional Eliot at odds with his own sensibility? Another Eliot, who feared being crippled by feeling in aesthetics and unable to act in love, like Yeats's persona in *The Tower* barely able to "admit you turned aside/From a great labyrinth out of pride"? (305). For A. Walton Litz, the poem's "tragedy is that of one who can perceive but cannot act, who can understand and remember but cannot communicate" (21). He has the example of the epigraph's Cumean Sybil, but also Tiresias, that "Most important personage in the poem", who though enacting some of its "fore-suffered" action, is also doomed to witness: Eliot's notes over "what Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem" (The *Poems* 74). What he hears might be equally important, and so much of this is Wagnerian, earworms emerging from the nineteenth-century unconscious. Could it be that even so dissected, they point to some profound emotional experience? Or is the impossibility of marking such experience in words the point? However, we answer Wagner seems to be what the poem cannot help but remember.

Philip Waldron has doubts about the "usual" interpretation of Wagner as "ironically contrasting a romantic, epic, fictionalized love with the impotence of the inhabitants of *the Waste Land*" (422). Agreed: the experience of both seems more closely connected. In a previous essay, I concentrated on what we can discover about Eliot's and others' experiences of Wagner's operas, but also all we need to learn about the blank tone of the poem and how to read it (Paterson 121-133). What is interesting is how Wagner came already premeditated, pre-experienced, by thousands of listeners: how few, perhaps including Eliot, heard the operas in full, and how, even if they did, could not do so innocently. So, for instance, the novelist George Moore could recall his pilgrimage to Bayreuth with the playwright Edward Martin: "we talked about the ring all the way to Dover, and on board the boat he whistled the motives, looking over the taffrail until it was time to go to bed" (147). Wagner's operas spawned a

cultural industry which thrived on the popularity of orchestral excerpts or Lizst's piano adaptations, the studying of scores, *libretti*, commentaries, and motivic fragments whistled only half-fittingly at sea. The kind of melomania thus inspired suggests a simultaneous fragmentation and over-saturation were already a part of the Wagnerian experience. Wagner was everywhere already quoted, rarely individually or innocently encountered. That such disconcerting reactions might feature in *The Waste Land* would make sense: they describe many people's experiences of the poem itself.

In trying to answer the above questions, this essay tries to conceive a listener to Wagner's operas who can read something of the emotional resonance of Eliot's allusions. They might have to be a public analyst of *The Waste Land* and private readers, in tune with both cultural memory and private memories. However, in either case, they must reckon with music's connections to memory and its translation in words and to music and words' previous hearings, overhearings, and re-readings. In gauging Eliot's own experience of hearing Wagner in “Opera”, one unpublished early poem looms large:

> Tristan and Isolde
> And the fatalistic horns
> The passionate violins
> And ominous clarinet;
> And love torturing itself
> To emotion for all there is in it,
> Writhing in and out
> Contorted in paroxysms,
> Flinging itself at the last
> Limits of self-expression.

We have the tragic? oh no!

Life departs with a feeble smile

Into the indifferent.

These emotional experiences

Do not hold good at all,

And I feel like the ghost of youth

At the undertakers ball. (*The Poems* 236)

Resistance to the point of disgust at the performers' physicality is inscribed here: Wagner might have retorted that at least the instrumental players, as in Bayreuth, should be sunk out of sight beneath the stage. In this open performance, the persona's embarrassment at the visibility of emotion causes passions to be rendered as contorted, love "Flinging itself," "Writhing in and out," in a terrible parody of the movement of the music. The persona's only possible response is an assumed detachment which does not attain the indifference the poem specifies (if so, why speak the poem?). Looking closer, considerable ambiguity in language persists. Whose are meant in recalling "These emotional experiences"—those of the characters, the performers, or (most interestingly) the listener(s)? Furthermore, if they "Do not hold good at all," does that mean they are too forced or weak to persist; that they exist sincerely but do not last; or even, with moral implication, that they come to no good? Despite itself, the poem fails to keep its emotions entirely in check, desperately gripping a comic, ironic mask that could easily slip.

Dated November 1909, it needs to be clarified that the poem refers to a fully staged performance, or any more than orchestral excerpts, Wagner arriving in fragments again. Still, in a recently disclosed letter to Emily Hale on 20 January 1931, Eliot makes an oblique reference in French to her knowledge of potions. According to *Dickey Reports*, He clarifies by remembering an early occasion wherein his youthful companion took him to see *Tristan*

und Isolde. Indeed, Jean Verdenal's enthusiasm and urging Eliot to hear Wagner seems to have contributed to a revaluation that left Stravinsky reporting, "Eliot's Wagner nostalgia was apparent, and I think that Tristan must have been one of the most passionate experiences of his life" (Stravinsky 125). Whatever his fragmentary, contradictory experience, Eliot's association of the opera with emotion, and importantly, with resistance to emotion, seems to have tied it in his mind with the aborted love affair with Hale, as well as Verdanal's fate at Gallipolli. All this attraction and resistance displays some continuity: Verdenal, too, writes of his effort to make sense of the difficulties of Wagner's operas alongside their addiction. As objects of study, they require intellectual rigour; as subjects of love, they demand considerable emotional capacity. Perhaps (for Eliot at least) always impossible to experience totally, they presented themselves instead, *The Waste Land* would eventually do: in unassimilable parts obsessed with voice and memory.

As this shows, as for so many others, the Wagner Eliot first knew was French. From January 1911 in Paris, Eliot attended lectures by celebrity philosopher Henri Bergson, suffering what he called "a temporary conversion to Bergsonism" (Sermon 5). Bergson's *Essai sur les donnees immediates de la conscience* (1889, translated 1910 as *Time and Free Will*) sought to make philosophy address time as much as space. In the process, it became a treatise on experiencing the world as a Wagnerian melody. Bergson found that "sensations will add themselves dynamically to one another and will organize themselves, like the successive notes of a tune by which we allow ourselves to be lulled and soothed." Taken together, "the whole produce on us the effect of a musical phrase which is constantly on the point of ending and constantly altered in its totality by the addition of some new note" (Bergson, *Time* 104-6). Bergson’s prose describes not an ordered Mozartian tune but Wagner's endless melody. If consciousness was thus embodied, Wagner's music itself might be expected to describe not only dreams, as Wagner himself claimed following Schopenhauer, but the *durées* of waking

consciousness. Bergson's *Matière et Memoire*, translated in 1910 as *Matter and Memory* further suggested the importance of memory's operation to perceiving this "rhythm of duration" as memory "inseparable in practice from perception, imports the past into the present, contracts into a single intuition many moments of duration" (Bergson, *Matter and Memory* 73). Perceiving a melody required both memory and anticipation and could itself be recalled successively—or as the earlier essay succinctly put it: a notion of *durée* "forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole, as happens when we recall the notes of a tune, melting, so to speak, into one another" (Bergson, *Time* 106). Organic wholes seem far from the action of Eliot's poem—but the action of "mixing/Memory and desire" is central to it (*The Poems* 55). So how to remember (or not remember) tunes becomes a defining action of consciousness in *The Waste Land*, as melodies, and memories of them, emerge in the poem.

In these surroundings, no wonder the poem remembers Verlaine's sonnet *Parsifal* from the *Revue Wagnerienne. The Fire Sermon* quotes the last line with one comma moved "*Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!*". Verlaine's poem is a classic piece of Wagneriana, at first more concerned with story and staging than music, and with remembering all that *Parsifal*, returning triumphantly to the throne *à la Wagner's opera*, tries to forget, including the talk and temptations of the flower-maidens ("*Les Filles, leur gentil/Babil and la luxure amusante*" (154)). In closing, it turns back surprisingly to something he might have never consciously remembered, exclaiming at the voices of boys singing in the dome. This is vocal music as disembodied as possible, Verlaine's last line a distant record of its hearing, Wagner's score directing that the choir boys should be out of sight of the audience in the performance. In Bayreuth, they sing invisibly from the dome, with accompanying music emerging from the pit. Further, the music they sing is different from the rest: a treble, youthful, virginal melody, as if in church. This moment is no obvious culmination: the boys' choir sings at the close of Act I, apparently excluding *Parsifal*, who may not even hear them.

The line thus emerges into *The Waste Land*, trebly silenced. Perhaps any performance would not live up to expectation, as another early Eliot poem notes: "Oh little voices of the throats of men/That come between the singer and the song" (*The Poems* 264). However, like *Parsifal*, we cannot hear these voices; we cannot, like George Eliot, hear the wind whistling through the cathedral keyhole of Wagner's music or follow the rest of Verlaine's poem. The line describes an aesthetic, really a religious experience to which we are almost completely denied access. Excluding so much necessarily expresses a lack, a blank.

However, involved in layers of denial, distancing, and repression, the line recalls the memory of a suppressed memory of music. Readers can question the continuing resonance of these voices from within the circular dome, even as the apostrophe "O" forms an appropriate symbol. Arriving to echo "O the moon shone brightly on Mrs Porter", any remaining gravitas appears spent in bathetic rhymes with "daughter" introducing a ritual "wash their feet with soda water", ironically recalling the grail vessel ("*le vase pur*", as Verlaine has it) (Eliot, *The Poems* 62). At the same time, evidence suggests this line is transformative. The only line in italics throughout *The Fire Sermon*, the only line ending with an exclamation mark, the apostrophe's "O" is key. So far, "O" in the poem has, unsurprisingly, been associated with the song, even as a whiff of doggerel clings to it. When used with a rhetorical flourish, it somewhat distances prophecy's potency ("O keep the dog far hence") and, in repetition, can undermine its musical force ("O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag" features Eliot's own riffing elaboration on a snatch of popular song). Later in *The Fire Sermon*, however, the apostrophe has gained some emotional weight, as in the sincere lamentation "O city city" and through the abasement of prayer "O Lord Thou pluckest me out." The Wagnerian sonnet fragment has enacted this transformation. If so, it mirrors the action of *Parsifal* in turning from youthful superficial vigour to authentic religious experience. Nevertheless, it seems more striking that it has done so by multiply distancing its "O" from all possible physical manifestations of music—

quadruply muted, the "O" barely survives as a sound marker, a received memory of some far-off emotional experience. In the poem, it leads directly to a deadened expression of birdsong: "Twit twit twit/Jug jug jug jug jug jug". Yet, however drily, these sound syllables drip themselves throughout the poem's consciousness. There they meet the Rhinemaidens' twice-repeated "Weialala leia/Wallala leilala" even as they falter into a fading "la la" (*The Poems* 66). These dislocations of language and memory are disconcerting, sometimes even horrifying (Verdenal had remarked how Tristan was atrociously moving "émeuvent atrocement"), but as they sit in terrible silence on the page, it is possible just about to remember their origins: at the beginnings of language, and at many removes, in music.

After Bergson, remembering music is a model for consciousness: Eliot's poem repeatedly records unsuccessful attempts to damn its stream. It is as if the playing of *Tristan und Isolde* cannot be stopped. After featuring the opera's Bavarian origins by the Starnbergersee, it spills out in the sea-borne sailor's love song "*Frisch weht der Wind*" (Eliot, *The Poems* 56). Although inaugurating the opera's sung portion, these words make an odd motif to employ: they point to an almost jaunty tune, easy to remember, to repeat, to sing: just the sort of thing to whistle on board ship on stage or on the way to Bayreuth. In fact, the implication, especially when repeated in the opera, is that the sailor has remembered the tune from somewhere himself. Its four-square repetition operates rather differently from Bergson's notion that *durée* (and memory) function like an endlessly unfolding melody. Cheerfully but terribly unforgettable, repeated more than once and at every performance, in the poem, it functions as a cypher for feeling, but maybe one whose repeats rather than progressions reproduce an empty duplication.

Different readers perforce hear these lines in different ways. Some readers can already hum (correctly or incorrectly) the sailor's jolly tune: more would know it if they heard it. To some, the words are familiar — others can look them up, and some fewer the music also.

Those less musically literate might still appreciate the tune if they came across it. Some readers, too, remain outside the ambit of its music, 'tone-deaf', in that unconvincing phrase, to its nuances. To them, the phrases of the poem are "neither living nor dead", as they remain "looking into the heart of light, the silence" On the other hand, this might be precisely the point. Trying not to hear Wagner's music at this moment in the poem might be as important as hearing it. Many readers (including Eliot's most intimate), having heard the tune, are never able to unhear or forget it, even perhaps in stammering senility. Like Tiresias, we might wonder if this is any less of a burden.

Notably, it is a burden shared by Tristan himself. Later in the opera, he is woken from a coma by a mordant melody from the shepherd's pipes, crying, "That old tune?/Why does it waken me?". This uneasy pastoral tune, "die alte Weise/sehnsuchtbang" [the old tune of yearning], familiar now to the opera's audience as we have heard it more than once, reminds him of his own origins and parents' death (Wagner 45). As its fourth and fifth leaps are elaborated into the opera's third act, it creates a musical charge seeking a "primal home amidst the piping of the pastoral metaphysical dance", as Nietzsche expresses it in *The Birth of Tragedy*, music through which we are faced with the full force of the Dionysian:

> can [one] imagine a man who could perceive the third act of *Tristan und Isolde*, unaided by word and image, simply as a tremendous symphonic movement, without expiring at the convulsive spreading of their souls' wings? How can such a man, have laid his heart against the ear of the world will and felt the tumultuous lust for life as a thundering torrent or as a tiny, misty brook flowing into all the world's veins, fail to shatter into pieces all of a sudden? (101)

For Nietzsche, the only thing stopping this shattering of a musically sympathetic listener is the necessary preservation of that restrained musical but also visual and verbal

principle, the Apollonian, a "power aimed at the reconstitution of the almost fragmented individual". By its influence, music's dark collective becomes individualised: it is not us who suffers, and we suddenly imagine we can see only Tristan, motionlessly, gloomily asking: 'The old melody; why does it awaken me?' Furthermore, what before seemed a hollow sight from the core of things now tells us only how 'barren and empty is the sea'. Moreover, where before we breathlessly felt on the verge of extinction in the convulsive paroxysm of all our feelings, connected to this existence by a mere thread, the symbol of the myth preserves us from gazing directly at the supreme idea of the world (102).

In this reading, such melodies, coming into recognisable focus, here played on *orchestral cor anglais*, translated into words and individual reactions, can start to act as a preservative, a symbol: only too memorable and repeatable but thereby just able to stop us tipping into the abyss of endless longing. It is notable that long before Eliot's poem does, Nietzsche has picked out the line '*Oed' und leer das Meer'*. Sung by Tristan's companion Kurwenal to a neutral, flat melody, as such it is not exactly memorable, nor quite emotional, but as flat and dead as the shipless sea it observes, though potentially expressing depths like the sea in implied harmony. Like much of Wagner, it thus comes to Eliot's poem pre-read, pre-quoted. That Eliot steals it to close a section itself full of remembered speech ("they called me the hyacinth girl") just as it shudders into wracked silence is telling: bits of already-borrowed Wagner bookend maybe the most tormented passage in the poem (56). One bitter irony comes in these fragments' desiccation: their removal from the liquid music on which they float. Another is that they all represent something already heard, pre-experienced, “fore suffered", perhaps many times. The darkest irony is that however inert and silenced they lie on the page, something of their music and situation is impossible to forget: they record apparently unforgettable things.

Despite differences in size and genre, Wagner's and Eliot's methods are, then, comparable, especially when it comes to memory. Kenner notes their shared focus on small things: "'A master of miniature', wrote Nietzsche of Wagner, intuiting the method of the long Eliot poem" (198). Furthermore, through small details, mammoth things might be experienced. In his Clark lectures, Eliot comments: "in *Laforgue*, there is a continuous war between the feelings implied by his ideas and the ideas implied by his feelings. The system of Schopenhauer collapses, but in a different ruin from that of *Tristan und Isolde*." (Eliot 745). Puzzling but revealing, this comment's sense of doubleness, of unresolved conflict, surely survives into *The Waste Land*. Presumably, the ruin of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* happens as the main characters break through the illusions of convention and the daily world to live through what Schopenhauer characterised as pure Will embodied in music. Rather than being released, they are destroyed by the experience, neither able to function in a lower world with no time for dreams and love; Tristan dies mortally wounded after a brief reconciliation, but so does Isolde, somewhat by choice. The different kind of ruin Eliot conceives is more like an arrested state, in which the worlds in conflict remain incompatible, irreconcilable, the horror in perceiving but not being torn asunder, and the collapse a restrained implosion, not generated through overwhelming consummation, but held in agonising persistence and repetition—the more agonising because somehow chosen. How much this recognises something of his stalled early love affair with Emily Hale is, for the moment, impossible to say. What we can say is that the tenor of this experience was orchestrated by Wagner and is everywhere marked by impossible-to-suppress memories of his musical dramas.

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The Voices of *The Waste Land* and their Narrative Function: A Narrative Approach to T. S. Eliot

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Abstract: Since its publication in 1922, *The Waste Land* has attracted a multitude of approaches over the years. This perdurable attention shows how the processes of reading *The Waste Land* still uncover new aspects of the poem. Nevertheless, the postclassical developments of narratology provide innovative models that can be applied to texts which were not previously analyzed through narrative methods. Indeed, even if classical narratology traditionally excluded lyrical poetry, a postclassical narrative approach allows the analysis of lyrical texts. This inquiry pursues an investigation of the narrative features of *The Waste Land*, aiming to expand the classical narrative view traditionally focused on the text.

The theoretical treatment of this inquiry pursues Peter Hühn's definition of narratology applied to lyrical texts. As he dismisses a primary function of the plot, the narratological devices can analyze every text that transmits a message.

According to this inquiry, the structural analysis of narrative elements of *The Waste Land* reveals the function of the voices of the poem as the direct linguistic expression of a specific subject. Indeed, the structure of the poem suffers from a proper lack of action: nevertheless, the textual dimension of the poem emerges from the articulation of the voices as sources of meaning.

Keywords: T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, Voices, Narrative theory, Lyric Narrative, Postclassical Narrative, Lyrical Structural Pattern.

Since its publication, *The Waste Land* has attracted an imperishable interest among literary critics, and still today, this poem represents a perpetual source of analysis. On the centenary

of its appearance, it still gathers new readings of these Eliotian characteristics, especially considering developments in literary criticism. The postclassical developments of narrative theories also work as the background for this paper, as it seeks to give a new understanding of its narrative construction. Indeed, while the narrative features of *The Waste Land* represented an object of analysis over the last century, the advance in narrative theory allows an innovative approach to their interpretation. This analysis considers the structural features as a means for the elucidation of the role of narrativity in Eliot's ideological account.

Nevertheless, the analysis of the structural pattern of Eliot's poem needs to consider the elements of narrative in *The Waste Land.* Indeed, the modern nature of Eliot's work, with its fragments form, evokes the dissolution of narrative unity, emerging from the lack of a proper plot. Nevertheless, the textual dimension of Eliot's work emerges from articulating the voices and patterns in which these perspectives alternate through the poem's sections. These voices function as sources of meaning, delineating the narrative path of the poem. Indeed, the voices of the poem offer a narrative reading of the structure of *The Waste Land*, performing as the fundamental architecture of the narrative pattern of Eliot's poem.

The Narrativity of *The Waste Land*

Before approaching Eliot's poem, it is necessary to elucidate a methodological statement about the procedure adopted through the analysis. The theoretical treatment of how narratology can be adapted to lyrical text pursues Peter Hühn's definition: he recognises that traditionally, the narrative theory has tended to restrict its focus to the analysis of narrative fiction, particularly on the prose defined by the device of the storytelling. Lyric poems, however, feature the same "constituents as narrative fiction," which Hühn defines as referring to a temporal sequence of happenings mediated from a particular perspective (Hühn 3). Furthermore, on the level of textual expression, the act of utterance in lyrical poems develops through the articulation of the sequence of happenings with the mediation of the "medium" of a verbal text.

The historical reception of *The Waste Land* demonstrates the issue exerted by narrativity in Eliot's work, as literary criticism has not considered the nature of this story necessarily narrative. In 1957, the literary critic Northrop Frye considered *The Waste Land* an oppositive work rather than attributed to fictional modes. He would disagree with the narrative assumptions of Eliot's poem. However, more recent interpretations tend to consider *The Waste Land* a poem with a narrative pattern, as Michael Levenson's interpretation of Eliot's work.

Firstly, the narrative features of *The Waste Land* require an incisive inquiry—more precisely, whether this typology of text permits a narrative inquiry. Noticeably, a text assumes a narrative dimension when it narrates something—and it might be tempting to provide an adequate definition of what makes a text a narrative text. Otherwise, Mieke Bal indicated a considerable definition of narrative theory as a "toolbox," or more accurately, "a range of approaches to text that can be considered, partially or wholly, narrative" (Bal 7).

Brian McHale explained why narrativity in lyric poetry remained controversial and problematic: "Modernism marks a crisis in the long poem: it interdicts narrative modes of organisation and submits the long-poem genre to a general "lyricization." The result is a long poem lacking any continuous narrative but instead made up of lyric fragments strung together in sequence. While not utterly banished, narrative shifts to another level, becoming the invisible "master narrative" that, present nowhere in the text, nevertheless ensures the text's ideological (if not formal) coherence. *The Waste Land* is paradigmatic in this regard" (McHale 162).

Canonically, a narrative structure is traditionally associated with prose texts, while narratological analysis usually omits lyrical works. Although, there is another distinction between lyrical poetry and narrative poetry, considering the latter as the kind of poetry in which there is a voice, which is not the lyrical subject, that incarnates a narrator—which actively demonstrates that there is a specific voice, which participates in the specific structure

of the poetic object, and that narrates something. In the case of *The Waste Land* of Eliot, although it consists of purely lyrical parts, evidently, there is a narrator. Throughout the poem, it becomes clear that a story is developing, as the quest for regeneration of a "wasteland."

The Narrative Structure of *The Waste Land*

In the beginning, this essay defined *The Waste Land* as a narrative text, which is essential to this analysis since the poem's structure represents the main object of this study. In the first instance, the presence of a specific narrator represents an essential feature of the definition of the poem as a narratological object of interest. Indeed, a narrator operates in Eliot's work as an external actor who tells a story to their narratees. However, through the progression of episodes or scenes that appear in the poem, the voices of these fragments do not seem to belong to a unique narratorial voice. Thus, the voice that appears in the first lines of the poem is not the only "character" who narrates in the story.

Indeed, the variety of tone and linguistic registers suggests that several narrators, or even a narrator of multiple voices, contribute to the narration of the poem. Furthermore, these voices refer to different events happening to various characters in various places and times. Indeed, the poem evokes the impression that the narration does not concern only one story but several fragments of different stories, and it appears almost impossible to follow time and space coordinates.

Furthermore, the whole structure of the poem does not consist only of the five sections, *The Burial of the Dead, A Game of Chess, The Fire Sermon, Death by Water* and *What the Thunder said,* as they occur along the poem. The first edition of *The Waste Land,* released in 1922 by Boni & Liveright, attached a supplement of notes to the original sections, and the use of these helps identify sources upon which Eliot has drawn inspiration. Moreover, they provide additional information about the materials of the poem. However, more importantly, these notes provoke such an effect on the reader that he cannot clearly understand the poem

itself. Due to their usefulness, they stimulate a sense of frustration. Indeed, many editions offer an additional apparatus of notes.

In his essay "The Frontiers of Criticism," Eliot himself recognised this apparatus as a "remarkable exposition of bogus scholarship" (109): this unusual use of notes can suggest they should not be read as a common appendix—and this introduces the second main character of the poem, the Editor. This voice is not on the same narrative level as the narrator mentioned above. Indeed, Francisco Collado Rodríguez observes that this voice can be assimilated to an "extradiegetic narrator with reference to the poem, as the narrator seems to be with reference to the story s/he tells in the poem: both entities, narrator and Editor, appear above the issues they deal with and should therefore possess an ironic view distanced from their objects" (Rodríguez 51).

The structure of Eliot's poem resembles an organic—though fragmented—work. Indeed, this conception helps delineate the different communicative levels that operate within *The Waste Land*, whose structure permits a division into divergent levels, each representing the different communicative degrees that operate within *The Waste Land*.

Indeed, the story itself represents the deepest level of the poem's structure. In this level, no narrator speaks singularly and explicitly. Indeed, there is an evident presence of a narrator of multiple voices that correlate with the several fragments mentioned previously in this essay. Moreover, these fragments seem to refer to the narrated events and concern several characters, which do not seem to be interrelated by the canonical temporal and spatial coordinates. To be more accurate, the several episodes narrated on this level recall the idea that they could be interrelated by the figure of the narrator and their mental association.

More explicitly, Rodríguez indicates that this narrator sometimes addresses their narratee through literary references, as in line 76, in which the exclamation "*hypocrite lecteur!*

- *mon semblable, - mon frère!*" attempts to break the "barrier" which separates the level of the narrator from the reader's level.

Furthermore, these narrative instances display a firm separation. In the first five sections, the Narrator of the story narrates a series of events, although the different sequences present these episodes in a peculiar order. Within the final notes, the editor places himself above the narrator, as its voice assumes more a stance of a critic than a narrating voice in the process of interpreting this poem.

Michael Levenson drew the importance of such a distinction, as he marked a connection with the late essay of Eliot, *The Three Voices of Poetry*, in which the poet delineated a taxonomy of the possibilities in which voices can appear in poetry. Most specifically, in this essay, Eliot presents voice as "address," the "directness of speech towards an audience or through a character": indeed, the first variety of voice is the one "of the poet talking to himself—or to nobody," the second occurrence is the voice of "the poet addressing an audience, whether large or small;" the latter is "the voice of the poet when he attempts to create a dramatic character speaking in verses" (Eliot 7).

The Voices within *The Waste Land*

Firstly, the analysis concentrates on the voices which characterise the poem as they emerge along the lines of Eliot's work. Indeed, the analysis of these voices might delineate the multi-structure of this masterpiece. Indeed, the term "voicing" might suit better the definition of voice, as the shifts between the acts of speech are usually excessively quick to permit stabling personhood.

Nevertheless, in *The Waste Land*, characters are a confluence of images, which resemble a situation in which the individuals melt into each other, giving the impression that they originate outside the world of the observer. Then, the characterisation of the voices which emerge from the poem seems noticeable.

While the poem identifies most voices solely because of the distinct characteristic of tone, some characters possess a name. Interestingly, the evocated names, as Marie, Madame Sosostris, and Philomel, belong to female-speaking voices. Indeed, in Eliot's poem, all women live within dramatic plots that evoke a striking narrative since *The Waste Land* depicts their voices as released by the verses which contain them.

According to Levenson, the intrusive cry of Philomel—defined as "inviolable" in the poem—represents the "originary" voicing of *The Waste Land* (Levenson 92): in her voice are embodied all the women's voices, echoed within the poem—as emphasised in Eliot's note on verse 218, in which he claims that "all women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias" (Eliot 23). Historically, the myth of Philomel derives from the *Metamorphosis of Ovid*, belonging to the Classical literary tradition, as Tiresias is connected to the Greek tradition.

These references to the literary tradition of the past highlight the fact that all speeches acquire an authoritative tone from the inherited voices of the past. The utterance "I Tiresias" (Eliot 13), which introduces the character, expresses the intensity of self-consciousness using the first personal pronoun and proper name, highlighting the struggle of identification within a world of disorder. The task embodied in their speech is to see and, more specifically, "to foretell": a more precise indication is supplied by Eliot in his note 218, in which Tiresias is recognised as the most important character—or voice—in the poem: "What Tiresias see, in fact, is the substance of the poem" (Eliot 23).

In particular, the voice which opens the poem, as previously stated, does not seem to belong to any particular character, and the work of Levenson highlighted this feature. Indeed, the openings of each section in *The Waste Land* do not have any overt reference to a speaker: these consist of descriptive utterances, and Levenson points out how each opening can be seen as a declaration that "points outward toward a condition of the world." Speech becomes the

assertion of fact through simple syntax and vocabulary, "scenes are surveyed from apparent detached and all-seeing vantage points" (Levenson 89). Metaphors and similes suggest a break in the neutrality of view, preparing a contrast that becomes clear, opposing the openings and the closings of each section.

Indeed, the closing verses consist of forcefully accented speech, which is not oriented towards any description. Indeed, they represent strong personal statements: these transitions are recurrent during each section—and Levenson sees these passages as signifiers of the "movement from the documentary eye to a strong personal statement" (Levenson 89), tracking the voices which occur through the poem. Moreover, these shifts mark a local repetition within the five sections, which identifies the rhythm. Overall, these contrasts mean a passage from the first gnomic utterances to personal ones.

Moreover, the importance of the context of voice is fundamentally recalled by the poet in the early title of the poem, "He Do the Police in Different Voices." Indeed, Levenson suggests this title might imply a connection to the range of implications that the notion of "voice" recalls, including performance, polyphony, and physicality. Furthermore, Eliot's original title for the poem does not only suggest, as claimed by Emery-Peck in her essay T*om and Vivien Eliot Do Narrative in Different Voices: Mixing Genres in 'The Waste Land's' Pub*, "the interest in voice and in the types of readerly performance made possible by narrative fiction" (Emery-Peck 331): the early title is borrowed from Dickens's Our Mutual Friend, and this reference represents the first intertextual allusion that characterises the continuous lineage of references linked to his literary ancestors.

As highlighted by Emery-Peck, this definition is taken from the description of the reading practice of Sloppy, a foundling who reads the newspaper aloud. In referencing this passage, Eliot does not only stress the description of a reader who plays with the possibilities of storytelling. The direct quotation of Dickens's citation, in recalling the ability of a figure of

a working-class man, who renders the experience of reading a polyvocal narrative adventure, also echoes the multitude of voices evocated along the poem, anticipating the narrative technique described so far.

In the end, as demonstrated by the previous analysis, *The Waste Land* does not present a traditional and linear plot. Indeed, the structure of the poem—as emerges from this inquiry—suffers from a proper lack of action. Nevertheless, the textual dimension of Eliot's work exists properly, and it emerges from the articulation of the voices and patterns in which these perspectives alternate through the sections of the poem.

Indeed, these voices function as sources of meaning, as they delineate the path designed by the poem. Indeed, the narrative meaning of *The Waste Land* does not lie in the existence of a linear plot. Instead, the lines of the poem resemble a circular structure built on the voices of the poem. Eventually, analysing the voices of the poem, Eliot's characters emerge directly from a wasteland to the surface of the text, achieving an effect of a weave in and out. Indeed, the narrative meaning of *The Waste Land* exists through the emergence of these voices, as the narrative structure of the poem relies on the sequences through which the lines of the poem evoke different voices.

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Eliot's Detective and Rowson's *The Waste Land*

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Abstract: As someone who made the modern world confront and acknowledge the horror of its existence, T. S. Eliot's influence on the modern psyche is undeniable. Among Eliot's poetic "heap of broken images" (*The Waste Land* 23), *The Waste Land* shines the brightest, colouring the psyche of Eliot's successors with its grandeur. This influence, while shaping the minds and by extension, the words of the later writers, simultaneously restricts the free play of the meaning by acting as a yardstick against which every single literary creation is created and assessed. The paper intends to explore the relationship between Eliot's poem *The Waste Lan*d and Martin Rowson's graphic novel *The Waste Land* in the context of Harold Bloom's theory of the "Anxiety of Influence" and Eliot's notion of "tradition and individual talent." Rowson's graphic novel, *The Waste Land,* is set in the heart of the detritus of the modern world, a world reminiscent of Eliot's "Unreal City" (Waste Land 60). As the precursor poet, Eliot's influence on Rowson's text can be discerned in the graphics, which are heavily influenced by the narrative of *The Waste Land.*

This chapter division corresponds to the five sections of the poem and the frequent appearance of characters such as Sweeny and Prufrock from Eliot's other poems. The graphic novel revolves around Chris Marlowe, who is on a quest to unearth the truth behind his partner's death. As he journeys across London in search of the murderer, one is confronted with the realisation that his quest to find the perpetrator mimics his and, by extension, a reader's journey through the labyrinthian alleyways of Eliot's text. In doing so, Rowson's successor text presents an alternative lens to view Eliot's antecedent poem, thereby exercising an influence at par with Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*.

Keywords: Anxiety, influence, detective, antecedent, successor

The Western history of the strife of supremacy between the masculine progenitor and the successor can be traced back to the Sophoclean play *Oedipus Rex*, where Oedipus, the son, inadvertently kills his father and subsumes him to the extent of assuming his political as well as social roles—a ruler of Thebes and the husband of Jocasta. This anxiety of paternal subjugation engendering a desire for freedom via complete paternal annihilation was set in motion by the twin impact of both the pagan Greek pantheon and the Christian Satan. Eventually, it percolated into the psyche of the Western poet enslaving him into a system dictated by his poetic father, a result of his contradictory emotions of admiration (born out of idealisation) and envy (spawned by unwanted indebtedness).

Condemned, by his belatedness, "To learn his profoundest yearnings through an awareness of *other selves*" (Bloom 26), he wishes to supersede the precursor at any cost and to become the untainted original that lies beyond the impact of any psycho-poetic influence. His "anguish of contamination" (Bloom xi), or what Bloom otherwise refers to as "the anxiety of influence," thus, compels him to orient his creative genius more towards overcoming the overwhelming influence of the poetic predecessors than towards artistic creation. This is done through "a complex act of strong misreading, a creative interpretation…[or] 'poetic misprision'" (Bloom xxiii) which allows them "to clear imaginative space for themselves" (Bloom 5).

A *bricoleur* par excellence, Thomas Stearns Eliot sought to free the Western authorial psyche from the angst of literary influence by embracing Tradition as a formative force to be cultivated and subsumed instead of opposed and contested. In his essay titled *Tradition and Individual Talent*, he explains that Tradition is not something that is involuntarily or unconsciously acquired but something that has to be consciously earned and laboured for. Eliot's Tradition demands a greater awareness, a "historical sense" (37), on behalf of the author

regarding his position in literary history in a way that completes his work and exalts him instead of subjugating him. More importantly, he asserts that poetic influence is a bilateral force "The necessity that he [belated poet] shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided…" (Eliot "Tradition" 37). Thus, the belated poet is not entirely a slave to the Tradition, parroting pre-created words and phrases; he has the agency to alter the existing canon of literary Tradition by attaching an added dimension and extra significance to it. His journey towards becoming a greater poet, therefore, involves an implicit submission to the Tradition and a perpetual erasure of the personality till the mind of the poet becomes one with the minds of his powerful poetic forefathers who forged the Tradition: "What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (Eliot "Tradition" 39). In doing so, the poet denies the Tradition of its power of influence by becoming one with precisely the thing that it was being influenced with.

The Waste Land and Eliot's Tradition

Eliot's theory of Tradition is, perhaps, best typified by his modernist collage of epic proportions, *The Waste Land,* where Eliot channels his individual talent through the framing network of allusions to multiple works by his empyrean precursors: "…we shall often find that not only the best but the most individual parts of his [poet's] work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously" (Eliot "Tradition" 37). These allusions, despite their density and complexity, guide the readers through the labyrinthian alleyways of Eliot's poetry and simultaneously bestow it with a touch of universality and timelessness: "I gave the references in my notes, in order to make the reader who recognised the allusion, know that I meant him to recognise it, and know that he would have missed the point if he did not recognise it" (Eliot, Dante 128).

Moreover, they act as Eliot's coping mechanism against "the anxiety of influence" by establishing a connection between the canonised precursors and his poem and making him partake in their greatness without replicating them entirely. His allusions, he believes, elevate him from the stature of a mere imitator to an independent poet worthy of canonisation since his reliance on Tradition makes him akin to "the scientist who uses the discoveries of an Einstein in pursuing his own, independent, further investigations" (Ulysses 130).

It is, therefore, somewhat ironic that the works of T. S. Eliot, who seeks to be an alleviator of influence anxiety, should colour the psyche of his successors with their grandeur—shaping their minds and, by extension, their words and restricting the free play of their meaning by acting as a yardstick against which every single literary creation is created and assessed. In this context, it would be interesting to assess the influence Eliot exerts over an artist like Martin Rowson, who willingly (much like Eliot) embraces the influence of Tradition in his graphic novel entitled *The Waste Land*, "a deliberately unsettled mixture of parody, homage, and travesty" (Williams and Brunner 180); and how Rowson manoeuvres through the poetic-path peppered with artistic influence.

Clinamen and Rowson's Swerve

Rowson's graphic novel, *The Waste Land*, is set in the heart of the detritus of the modern world, a world reminiscent of Eliot's "Unreal City" (Waste Land 60). It revolves around Christopher Marlowe, a West Coast private investigator who is on a quest to unearth the truth behind his partner's murder. As he journeys from Los Angeles to London, and eventually through its rat-infested alleyways, to avenge his partner's murder, he becomes increasingly entwined in a whirlpool of events evocative of hard-boiled detective fiction. Rowson's detective story gradually segues into a quest for the mythical Holy Grail as multiple murders, and disappointing deceptions give way to an uncomprehending crusade through the criminal underbelly leading Marlowe to the Holy Grail. While the criminal context of Rowson's text

seduces one away from Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Marlowe's seemingly aimless crusade through London brings one right back to it.

Rowson's text, thus, is not a simplistic adaptation of Eliot's *The Waste Land* that merely highlights, elucidates, explains and comments upon its significant aspects (McHale 34); it does more than transpose Eliot's poem into the graphic medium (Tabachnik 2, 8). It is his means of coping with the anxiety born out of his inability to reach the intended meaning of Eliot's poem, which is rendered further ungraspable by its fragmentary and polyvocal nature. In fact, Marlowe's search for the meaning of his partner's death through the bread-crumb trails of digressing and distracting evidence is symbolic of Rowson's search for the meaning of Eliot's text on the basis of textual evidence.

As he distils Eliot's text through the filter of detective fiction, he adjusts his trajectory marginally instead of blindly following his footsteps and clears up a little bit of space for himself amidst the literary stalwarts. Consequently, his creative revisionism of Eliot's antecedent text as a detective fiction swerves away from the powerful original in such a way that he is partially freed from the imposing shadow of Eliot's tremendous legacy and, at the same time, celebrates it. Rowson's swerve has a striking resemblance to Bloom's first revisionary ratio called *Clinamen or swerves,* where the ephebe tries to fade the continuum between his poetic present and past by swerving away from the original trajectory of the precursor text in order to heighten its significance in the greater matrix of the literary canon: "This [*Clinamen*] appears as a corrective movement in his poem, which implies that the precursor went accurately up to a certain point, but then should have swerved precisely in the direction that the new poem swerves" (Bloom 14, 42).

Tessera and the Narrative Gaps

Beyond the title, which is a major giveaway, Eliot's influence on Rowson's text can be discerned in the graphics, which are heavily influenced by the narrative of *The Waste Land* as

well as other poems of Eliot; the depiction of urban life as a suffocating, alienating and disintegrating reality; a narrative whose structuration is heavily reliant on the myth of the Holy Grail as a means of making sense of an unintelligible present via an intelligible past; the chapter division corresponding the five sections of the poem; a style that frequently alludes to the whole gamut of *Western literary Tradition;* the frequent appearance of characters such as Sweeny and Prufrock from Eliot's other poems; and more. Despite the overwhelming similarities, what distinguishes Rowson's text from that of Eliot's is his decision to use his position as an ephebe to his advantage; he uses his belatedness as a strength: "the difference between the present and the past is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show" (Eliot, Tradition 38). As if the swerve was not enough, Rowson takes a step ahead and engages with the narrative gaps in Eliot's text to complete them in order to concretise his originality or, at least, his individuality.

The fragmentary nature of *The Waste Land* has been highlighted by many:

- Eliot refers to it as a "heap of broken images" (23).
- McHale characterises it as a "quasi-narrative poem" (34).
- Kinney calls it a "poetic anti-narrative" (180).

In fact, its fragmentation was a deliberate choice made by Eliot's *"il miglior fabbro*" (Eliot Waste Land 3), Ezra Pound, who inserted narrative fissure into a connected, continuous, cohesive and coherent narrative by eliminating enormous narrative chunks of the poem. Rowson utilises his belated insight into the narrative gaps in the poem and, as Brian McHale observes, "narrativises *The Waste Land*. In other words, Rowson takes a text that…is only sporadically, obliquely and problematically narrative, and supplies the missing or "lost" narrative elements" (34). Rowson does so through the persona of Christopher Marlow, who is sent on a wild goose chase for a lost object. Marlowe's journey becomes symbolic of Rowson's pursuit of the "lost" segments of Eliot's poem as the undefined lost object in the graphic novel

is revealed to be the mythical Holy Grail—the source of the very myth which is used as an organising principle of *The Waste Land* by Eliot. As Eliot confessed in his "Notes" on *The Waste Land*, "Not only the title, but the plan and a good deal of the incidental symbolism of the poem were suggested by Miss Jessie L. Weston's book on the *Grail legend: From Ritual to Romance* (Cambridge)" (21). By embedding the Grail legend, which is the key to deciphering Eliot's poem into the plot of his text, Rowson *supplements* Eliot's text and, by extension, completes it. However, the restored story may not be the same as the one intended by Eliot (McHale 46).

Rowson's defragmentation of Eliot's poem may be categorised as Tessera or link, Bloom's second revisionary ratio where "[a] poet antithetically 'completes' his precursor, by so reading the parent-poem as to retain its terms but to mean them in another sense, as though the precursor had failed to go far enough" (Bloom 14). In doing so, Rowson manages to capture, however fleetingly, the elusive meaning of Eliot's *piece de résistance*, which attaches a sense of eminence to his multimodal adaptation of Eliot. However, since the meaning that he attaches to Eliot's poem may not be the same as the one intended by Eliot, Eliot's antecedent text must accommodate the additional signification. To quote William and Brunner, "Every panel…negotiates a place for itself in Eliot's original poem" (180). As a text capable of influencing Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Rowson's *The Waste Land*, therefore, assumes a grander stature and manages to establish itself as a strong successor text.

Citations, Repetitions and *Kenosis*

An adaptation of Eliot's *The Waste Land* must borrow its erudite and esoteric nature. However, what really individualises Rowson's graphic novel is the nature of the allusions he relies on. As previously established, Rowson's text is no ordinary adaptation of Eliot's poem, and the distinction between the two is further enhanced by Rowson's treatment of the materials he derives and borrows from Eliot. While the American edition closely follows the text of Eliot's

poem, including the verbatim reproduction of several sections of the poem as well as the names of some of its characters, the British edition had to do away with any quotation or reference that established a connection between Eliot's poem and Rowson's text in order to accommodate the rigorous British copyright laws. What followed was erasing textual references, renaming of characters, and replacing citations present in Eliot's poem with newer ones (Williams and Brunner 179-180). For instance, Mike the Minoan assumed the identity of Phlebas the Phoenician, Mr. Eugenides was rechristened Mr. Eumenides, and Idaho Ez replaced Stetson. Similarly, Eliot's Latin epigraph with Greek interpolation was replaced by a thematically similar, alternative Latin text with Greek words wherein Sibyl's pitiful whisper, "I want to die," became Chiron's powerful cry, "I don't want to be immortal!" (McHale 195). As taxing as the whole endeavour might have been for Rowson, the adjustments allow him to retain some autonomy and agency as an ephebe doomed to create replicas.

Thus, Rowson, in the British edition, seemingly empties himself of any discernible influence of Eliot by repeatedly re-enacting Eliot's method of poetic creation—citations from arcane sources and the usage of Tradition as a catalyst for his evolving individual talent—with a difference. This allows Rowson to present his text in a way that the reader might mistake some of the citations by him as those from Eliot's text—"His stance *appears* to be that of his precursor…but the meaning of the stance is undone" (Bloom 90), and he is mistaken to be his own precursor. To elucidate, for a reader without knowledge of Latin and Greek, Eliot's epigraph and Rowson's prologue might seem woefully similar, especially since the sentiments their translations reflect border congruence. One might even mistake the two to be the same, thereby, allowing Rowson's quote to displace that of Eliot and by extension bestowing upon him the honour of partial authorship of Eliot's *The Waste Land.* This act of Rowson follows the third revisionary ratio of Bloom or *Kenosis*, whereby he forces a

discontinuity between Eliot, the precursor, and himself. By isolating himself from Eliot, he is undoing his influence and, consequently, his godhood (Bloom Anxiety 88, 90).

Demonization and Rowson's Counter-Sublime

Any adaptation of Eliot's *The Waste Land* is incomplete without including his notorious "Notes." Rowson's adaptation condenses Eliot's multi-page "Notes" into a single-page illustration depicting a cryptic conversation between Eliot and Marlowe. "The Notes" section opens with a "Snip Snip" sound which leads one to a figure resembling Eliot, who is shown to be snipping away excerpts from the books that Eliot has alluded to in *The Waste Land*—a visual representation of Eliot's poetic montage. The subsequent panels present a frustrated Marlowe barging into Eliot's dominion, demanding an insight into the mystery he has been confronting surrounding the murder of his partner, the quest for the mythical Holy Grail, and the meaning of Eliot's text: "So tell me about the dead chauffeur. How's the figure? And what's the big beef about London and the goddam river? And Eugenides, and the kid with the Hyacinths… How's all that hang together?" (Rowson 60).

Rowson, through the persona of Marlowe, interrogates Eliot and, through this very interrogation, disempowers him. Eliot's evasive response in a foreign tongue which is just as abstruse as his poem, is promptly resisted by Rowson–"Quit the wiseguy stuff! Give me the juice on the grail!" (60). Instead of letting Eliot's influence stifle his art, Rowson makes a conscious decision to investigate the mystery underlying the core of Eliot's poetry in order to understand it, and in the process, creates a Counter-Sublime to Eliot's Sublime. Bloom characterises this move as daemonization or "a movement towards a personalised Counter-Sublime, in reaction to the precursor's Sublime" (Bloom 15). When Eliot insists on the immortality and unchangeable nature of his work through the borrowed lines of Ovid (Rowson 60), Rowson highlights the ephemeral quality of Eliot's words and depicts those "words

becoming undone as their context is shifted about; no author is powerful enough to withstand questioning" (Williams and Brunner 189).

As an ephebe, he may not be strong enough to solve the mystery at the heart of Eliot's poem, but his attempt to do so brings him one step closer. Relishing his newfound strength, he lands one last blow and ends his adaptation with a cheeky "Thantih Thantih Thantih, thuckers!!" (Rowson 60). The distorted omen of peace that he concludes with, only serves to create a sense of unease as the reader confronts Eliot's failure to provide the peace ("Shantih") it promises. Thus, Rowson, like a daemonized ephebe, questions the untouchable stature of Eliot as a precursor by launching a two-pronged attack that both highlights the weakness of Eliot's poetry to humanize him (Bloom 100) and heightens the strength of Rowson's text and in the process strengthens him—"Daemonization or the Counter Sublime is a war between Pride and Pride, and momentarily the power of newness wins" (Bloom 101).

Ubiquity of Influence and Askesis

In the final section of Rowson's *The Waste Land*, the character of Eliot remarks upon his position as an ephebe to the classical poets. The impact of the anxiety of influence upon him is so strong that he can only articulate using borrowed phrases from his predecessors:

> et me fecere poetam
> Pierides, sunt et mihi carmina, me quoque dicunt
> vatem pastores; sed non ego credulus illis.
> nam neque adhuc Vario videor nec dicere Cinna
> digna, sed argutos inter strepere anser olores. (Virgil qtd. in Rowson 60)

He, like Virgil's *Lycidas*, is lamenting how his songs or poems are inferior compared to his dazzling classical predecessors represented by Cinna and Varius. Eliot's lament is also a confession of his dependence on other poets, note Williams and Brunner—"he had borrowed the best parts of his poem" (189). Here Rowson, much like Eliot, foregrounds the collaborative

nature of literature and shows how not even an influential poet like Eliot can evade the all-pervasive influence of literary Tradition. This leads one to the fifth revisionary ratio *Askesis* where the belated poet "yields up part of his own human and imaginative endowment…and he does this in his poem by so stationing it in regard to the parent-poem as to make that poem undergo an askesis too; the precursor's endowment is also truncated" (Bloom 15).

Rowson's story, like Eliot's *The Waste Land*, begins with a homage to the opening lines of Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales:* "It was April. April with its showers sweet, as the poet said. Well, nuts to that…" (2). Here the poet is Chaucer and the line it refers to is, "Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote" (41). From the very outset Rowson wants us to feel the looming presence of powerful precursors which truncates his poetic talent. Once we have unearthed the presence of Chaucer, we are redirected to Eliot's *The Waste Land* whose opening lines, "April is the cruellest month" (5), boast a similar influence, thereby truncating Eliot's endowment through association. As a poet suffering from the pangs of anxiety of influence, Rowson seeks to establish a camaraderie with Eliot as if to assert how he too, like Eliot, is a strong poet despite the evidence supporting the ubiquitous presence of influence, and in doing so assumes a greater significance at the cost of "curtailment, a sacrifice of some part of himself whose absence will individuate him more, as a poet" (Bloom 121).

Apophrades and the Re-fragmentation of *The Waste Land*

Eliot's *The Waste Land* is a poem comprising multiple segments. Its five major sections accommodate multiple sub-sections with different contexts, narrators and characters. While, Rowson tries to weave them together in his graphic novel, in the process he also ends up incorporating a different form of segmentation in the form of gutters and the narrative gaps characteristic of detective fiction. His defragmentation of Eliot's poem constitutes a re-fragmentation of the same, and much like Eliot's *The Waste Land* one has to fill in the narrative gaps as one traverses from one panel to the next.

For example, if we consider the first 18 lines of Eliot's poem, they give us an impression of continuity which a closer examination dismantles. Lines 1-4 have a prophetic tinge to them, followed by lines 5-7 which are spoken by a suffering collective. The narrative then suddenly shifts to accommodate the reminiscing voice of a woman named "Marie" across lines 8-18. Rowson illustrates this section of Eliot's poem in the first page of the first chapter of his graphic novel, "The Burial of the Dead." He gives names and faces to the multiplicity of voices that one encounters in Eliot's text, and soliloquies and monologues become dialogues. While making us aware of these hidden segments in Eliot's text, Rowson's graphic novel simultaneously re-fragments the same across three asymmetrical panels, and once more, the reader is compelled to use his imagination to fill in the narrative gaps. As Brian McHales points out, "Rowson often segments his version in different places than Eliot does; he re-segments *The Waste Land*, filling in where Eliot left gaps, and opening gaps where Eliot's text was continuous and unsegmented" (44-45). The visualization of Eliot's narrative, the re-framing of the poetic text as dialogues, the usage of flashbacks and spatial displacements to create as well as undo poetic discontinuities make us read and interpret Eliot's poem differently. This propensity of Rowson's text of influencing Eliot's poem finally subverts the idea of poetic influence to the extent that the reader often left to wonder whether their misprision of Eliot is inherent to the text or is influenced by Rowson's graphic novel. Rowson finally achieves the final step, that is, Apophrades or "a style that captures and oddly retains priority over their precursors, so that the tyranny of time almost is overturned, and one can believe, for startled moments, that they are being imitated by their ancestors" (Bloom 141). In doing so, Rowson throws a belated shadow of influence on Eliot's text to the extent that the readers of Eliot's poem might look into Rowson's graphic novel for insightful clues, as they do with Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance.*

Through his misreading or misprision of Eliot in the form of a visual representation of the history of intra-poetic relationships embedded in Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Rowson finally manages to come to terms with his position as an ephebe and the incumbent anxiety of influence. Simultaneously, he also manages to truncate the poetic prowess of Eliot, however fleetingly, by making Eliot seem like the author of Rowson's text and vice versa. Thereby creating an occasional illusion of Marlowe being Eliot's detective and Rowson authoring Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

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Madame Sosostris and Her Tribe: A Study of the Women in *The Waste Land*

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Abstract: *The Waste Land*, one of the seminal texts of the Modernist impulse, had a significant impact on readers and writers when it was published in 1922 and on the generations that followed. The poem concerns the post-war social and cultural breakdown presented through sterile and infertile human relationships. This breakdown of communication and relationships is portrayed through mythical and real female characters. The disintegration of modern civilisation and the resultant loss of faith in spirituality, love and relationships is portrayed through the women, characters like Sibyl, Marie Larisch, the hyacinth, girl, Madame Sosostris, Belladonna, Philomela, Lil, the nymphs, Actaeon, and Diana, a typist girl, three daughters of Thames and Queen Elizabeth I. The women in *The Waste Land* dominate the narrative, and there are divergent views about their depiction. While some have criticised Eliot for his misogynistic treatment of women, others have hailed him as a feminist who has highlighted the plight of these female subjects as victims of failed western civilisations. This paper takes a re-look at *The Waste Land* from the lens of contemporary feminist debates to study the women in the poem whom Eliot has used to portray the agony, horror, and decay of the modern world.

Keywords: Contemporary Feminist Debates, *The Waste Land*, Female, Representation

He thought her beautiful, believed her impeccably
wise; dreamed of her, wrote poems to her, which, ignoring the
subject, she corrected in red ink.
—Virginia Woolf

History is and has always been his-story, his story about men, women and beasts. Women took to ink in the early 1900s, and since then, they have been trying to correct "his-story." However, can ink make all the difference? In contemporary times ink alone is not sufficient. Multiple mediums of communication and entertainment have emerged, from few-second reels on YouTube and Instagram to Films, Series and Radio—all narratives require the female voice to provide a legitimate source to understand the female, her identity, subjectivity and lived experiences. "We need women at all levels, including the top, to change the dynamic, reshape the conversation, to make sure women's voices are heard and heeded, not overlooked and ignored" (Sandberg).

The Waste Land is a narrative poem and contains dozens of narrations, descriptions and dialogues. There is no consistent speaker in the poem. Voice is the most excellent tool and can also be seen in use in *The Wasteland* by T. S. Eliot amidst the chaos in an attempt to emphasise and explore the mind, the man and the modern world. Eliot has been a champion of "Tradition" and the "Ideal-Order" both of which have been markers to ensure that the production of works of art is curated to fall under the umbrella labelled the "Great Tradition" and these are all men's text or text written by men. The flaw of this *Great Tradition* is that the women's voice is missing. Women are seen, understood and represented through the lens of male subjectivity.

Similar to Ted Hughes' description of *The Waste Land as* "a drama for voices," "an assemblage of human cries," "exactly as in a musical composition, and only waiting for us to hear them", I too feel that Eliot has mastered the use of voice in the poem. One finds a

multitude of voices—from agitated anxious ones to calm and critical; authoritative, pensive, brooding, humble, chatty, personal, impersonal, voices addressing the reader in many different languages like German, Sanskrit, French, Latin, Italian and Greek; voices which represent both high and low art; voices of famous characters from other literatures and history etc. But among this polyphonic variety what is fascinatingly missing is the voice of a/any woman. Thus the poem fails to provide the artistic landscape that can raise issues of subjugation and marginalization; defend women rights, sexualization of female gender, lack of justice etc.

For instance, the character of Sybil in Ovid's *Metamorphosis* is vastly different from Eliot's depiction of the same. Ovid presents a woman who has grasped the importance of her voice. As a seer, the *Sybil of Cumae* is seen relying on her voice to share her prophecies; her voice acts as a gateway to the authority (Abrams 2147). Even as she faces utter decay, she declares that she will still be recognized by her voice (Ovid XIV: 227). Sybil's action of raising her voice over her body underpins the importance of the voice by suggesting that a person without a voice is merely a body without an identity. Additionally, the voice represents the power to define and maintain an identity, a skill that is especially valuable in the chaotic modern world. While Eliot's portrayal ensnares all female figures in the cage of male domination, they are oppressed and without a voice of their own. Sybil in the poem is the *Cumaean Sibyl* and she greets the readers with her terrible *apothanein thelo—I want to die.* Eliot opens his epigraph with this quote taken from the *Satyricon of Petronius,* simultaneously laying emphasis on the negativity, loss, and weak side of Sybil. She is the doorkeeper of Hades—additionally a doorkeeper welcoming the readers to hell—images of suffering, fear, chaos, nothingness, disassociation all greet the reader in the epigraph itself:

> "Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis vidi
> in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent: Σιβυλλα
> τι θελεις; respondebat illa: αποθανειν θελω."

For Ezra Pound

il miglior fabbro. (Eliot 1-4)

"Men often ask me, 'Why are your female characters so paranoid?' It's not paranoia. It's recognition of their situation" (Atwood). But what after recognition? It's the struggle, the story and the space to recognize the struggle and value the story. And this will put a stop to the prevalent thought— "We still think of a powerful man as a born leader and a powerful woman as an anomaly" (Atwood). Considering that *The Waste Land* was hailed as the precursor to the modernist movement, which challenged old structures and norms, one expects that old gender constructs, too, would be defied and challenged. More importantly, in his works, the representation of women would counter stereotypical representations prevalent during that time, where women and their stories are recognized. Nevertheless, while reading the poem, one can observe that the women in *The Waste Land*, living in an age of spiritual bankruptcy, have been straitjacketed in a typically patriarchal mould, shown as trivial, faithless, lustful, sterile and hysterical. Additionally, the large part of the poem is about social and cultural breakdown; represented via ruined communication and infertile human relationships. Eliot gives the particular impression of loss, sadness, depression and breakdown through women subjects. What is fascinating to note is that most of the characters in the narrative are women, but they are limited characters. Eliot comes across a failed modernist with respect to feminism; for his female characters are explored only through their relationships with men. Women as individuals are not seen. The relationships are also broken and brutal and to some extent parallel with the relationship men have with the society which mirrors the social crisis and anxiety ridden twentieth century.

While women are considered synonymous to creators who have a connection with the spiritual world, in the world of *The Waste Land*, women have a relationship with the broken world of communication and relationships (portrayed primarily through women characters,

both mythical and real.) "Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (Woolf) and Eliot too has used them as tools for the same. The disintegration of modern civilisation and the resultant loss of faith in spirituality, love and relationships is portrayed through the women characters like Sibyl, Marie Larisch, the hyacinth girl, Madame Sosostris, Belladona, Philomela, Lil, the nymphs, Actaeon and Diana, the typist, the three Thames' daughters and Queen Elizabeth.

"The Burial of the Dead"

This section too is a modified dramatic monologue similar to that of the poem "Prufrock." There are four frantic speakers in this section speaking urgently and are stopped abruptly. This causes confusion and creates an obfuscating situation for the reader who may end up assuming that there is a single character speaking. Additionally, the reader is left feeling inadequate and trapped, unable to find a narrative easy to follow. Moreover, the narrative is burdened with varied depressing themes. The burden to convey these themes fall upon the female characters. Focusing on the gendered portrayal, one finds that the female is burdened with bringing life into existence, burdened with its upbringing, burdened with the blame if anything goes wrong. In real life, the act of carrying these burdens has two resultant situations—some victorious and happy, others sad and full of grief, spread in a balance throughout the life of the individual women. Unfortunately, in Eliot's version the grave and the grim is all encompassing.

The barren state of human existence is the motif with which this section begins. This issue is human-centric not female-centric. The gendered character of bareness has been addressed by many contemporary critics. Infertility and inability to conceive can be due to either gendr and many anatomical issues. But since time immemorial the stigmatisation of barrenness is perpetuated through the patriarchal understanding of individual characters. Barrenness is considered shameful and the barren woman is a person carrying past sins.

Propagating these ideas in the name of 'Tradition,' displays a lack of 'Talent' and is a mockery of the term 'modernism.'

In the following stanza Eliot writes, "Fresh blows the wind to the homeland; my Irish sweetheart, where are you?" (Eliot 405). A lady answers the call and informs that a year ago, her lover gave her hyacinths and since then she is called the "hyacinth girl" (Eliot 405). Her identity is not of an individual but of a dependent. Furthermore, when she cannot see him, she becomes speechless. The reader finds her in a blank and empty state. The poem describes her as "Oed' und leer das Meer" meaning "Desolate and empty is the sea."

In the following stanza:

> Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyante,
> Had a bad cold, nevertheless
> Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,
> With a wicked pack of cards. Here, said she,
> Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,
> (Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)
> Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,
> The lady of situations. (Eliot 46-53)

We find Madame Sosotris the famous clairvoyant and her tarot cards. Eliot uses the images to showcase the decline of the Western Society. For instance, she is known to own an evil deck of tarot cards. While entertaining a merchant client she draws a card of the drowned Phoenician Sailor; here Eliot attempts to convey that no matter how knowledgeable humankind may get, like the Phoenician Sailors, they are all still doomed. She draws another one out and says here is Belladonna, the beautiful lady of rocks and situation; here Eliot with his assembly of images brings together Christian Faith with poison. It is a weird combination which is startling and signals ill fate. Madame Sosotris continues and pulls out

a card of a man with three staffs (symbolizing famine and drought), a wheel of fortune (medieval motif of life and death and its cyclical nature), a one-eyed merchant (a fake made-up card, representing fraud, flaky and unreliable people of *The Waste Land*), and a blank card which represents the burden of the past which the merchant carries. All of the symbols and images convey a disastrous and decaying society which is doomed.

Gender is a social and cultural categorization of masculinity and femininity. Gender presentations in works of art are the end product of the cultural process of defining social and sexual identity. Pictorial art, various images, accounts in literature, as means of expression and idea presentation are mediums with which transformation and stylization of identity occurs. Sensitivity and cautious effort is required on the part of the author/artist in depicting gendered issues, since works of art reflect this cultural process in its formation and continuity. Pictorial symbols such as fertility and motherhood carry a symbolic and conceptual context with cultural meaning and if used as mediums to convey other messages can result in conveying convoluted, patriarchal, complex notions that can hinder identity formation. Eliot's use of female figures to convey doom, death and decay is one of the prime examples of such a hindrance. Madame Sosotris and her tribe of women in *The Waste Land* have all failed to convey their personal or private opinions and have been rendered to being personified vehicles for Eliot's ideas and understanding of the post-war 20th century.

Similarly, Griselda Pollock's *What's Wrong with Images of Women?* raises similar issues. The book speaks about the neglect around the issue of women's images and stereotypes. She also highlights the fact that "representations are not merely reflections of reality, whether 'true' or distorted, but are rather the product of an active process of selecting and presenting, of structuring and shaping, of making things mean—of what came to be termed a 'signifying practice.'"

"The Game of Chess"

The second section "A Game of Chess" is in two parts/stories. The poet in both the stories uses women characters as vehicles to carry forward the theme and motif of impure, hollow, vain, emotionally devoid modernized love. He has depicted how in modern times love demands, looks, how love is not selfless anymore and more importantly how love has become like a game of chess, a cerebral game in which one wants to dominate the other.

History can tell how hysteria and women have been friends for centuries and how the first wave feminism had to battle such biased diagnoses to restore female sensibilities and issues surrounding their mental health. The first part of this section is written mostly in unrhymed iambic pentameter lines, or blank verse. As the section progresses, irregularity in length and metre and a sense of disintegration, of things falling apart continuously increases. This occurs in simultaneity to the female character and her paranoid thoughts. There is a visible return to slight sanity when irregularity in metre is improved in the last four lines of the first half rhyme.

The first story of this section reflects upon the meaningless relationship between two lovers who are not attracted to each other anymore. In the description Eliot paints for his reader the lady, who is compared with Shakespeare's Queen Cleopatra and is seen sitting on a chair which is "like a burnished throne." The poet specifically brings attention to the glitzy objects—her throne reflecting on the marble, lights reflecting on the table, the jewellery glittering from the satin cases to comment on how glittery appearances matter more to the modern people more than substance. Eliot also comments on the make-up and cosmetics of the lady. He finds the perfumes and powders owned by the lady disturbing and strangely enough they cause troubling, confusing and overwhelming sensations. They also disturb the fresh air coming through the window, therefore labelling them as unnatural. The forest-scene painting hanging above the antique fireplace is of great significance too. The painting

illustrates the metamorphosis of "Philomela" into a nightingale, who was raped by a barbaric king. This allusion exhibits the pathetic condition of women and male dominance in society. Philomela the nightingale, fills the desert with her unbreakable voice but nobody hears her. This helps Eliot to show how modern people have lost their humanity and how they are unable to hear women crying in pain.

Although the purpose, the aim and ambition of the poem is unique, important and reasonable but the way it is carried forward is problematic. As Gerard Genette in his *Narrative Discourse* states, "it is not about the tale, it is about how the tale is told" (Genette 28). Eliot choosing female characters to convey the artificial love, vanity and deterioration of love is not ideal. Laura Mulvey too reflects upon the ideological and the ideal. She writes about the importance of cultural texts, and how they impact us as individuals. According to her, they constitute the spaces where we seek to understand and give meaning to our identities. It is through them that we attempt to construct our sense of a gendered self. The images and representations which are the bearers of ideology are also those through which, by processes of identification, we construct our own identities as human subjects. Women as central subjects to the concept of betrayed love, love and vanity, unattached/unresponsive love propagate the stereotypes associated with women.

The second story communicates the emotional sterility of the modern world. This section importantly shows the inability to communicate or connect, to be empathetic and kind at all levels. The story has a collage of different images—death is discussed in different arrangements like abortion and the repeated sentence "Hurry up its time" (Eliot). The highly labyrinthine, erudite, and allusive style of the poem is noteworthy.

"The Fire Sermon"

In this section, Eliot tries to reveal the modern world's loveless relationships and meaningless sex with the example of the liaison between Elizabeth and Leicester. Eliot's depiction of

Elizabeth and Spenser aims at depicting that romance is dead. Eliot's queen seems impervious towards her lover's proclamations and declarations. Similar to other little narratives, this story too comes to an abrupt end with a few lines from St. Augustine's *Confessions* and a vague reference to the Buddha's Fire Sermon ("burning"). Referring to St Augustine's prayers to Jesus, asking him to save him from 'lust' and to take him away from this 'burning.' *The Waste Land* conveys the lack of culture/class in this modern world and the descent into vulgarity which distances people from one another.

Female leadership has always been questioned and a woman in power is always targeted. Elizabeth's reign was also hotly debated. Prominent theologian John Knox had written an angry polemic entitled *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstruous Regiment of Women*, where he found Queen Elizabeth's rule—'repugneth to nature,' and when compared to men—'foolishe, madde and phrenetike.' Eliot too targets her love life and her much celebrated love affair and projects it as monotonous and repulsive. Irrespective of all the allegations the queen faced throughout her time on the throne, the period of Elizabeth's reign is now referred to as a 'Golden Age', and in direct defiance of Knox's polemic, Elizabeth became the prime example for the world and proved that women can cope, and indeed thrive, in power.

Images of power are so often represented as male even today and it is very difficult for women to define power in their own terms. Elizabeth fought many stereotypes and many real time wars during her reign. Recategorising and reassigning a powerful female icon without much sensitivity is detrimental to the image of women in history. Eliot gives a misguided impression of a historic figure which is indeed problematic.

"Death by Water"

In this section the poet apprises the readers of the aim of life; he also hints towards *karma* and *Upanishadic* teachings. The section has multiple connections--for instance, it reminds one of

T. S. Eliot's French poem "*Dans le Restaurant,"* and it links Madame Sosostris's tarot card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor, and the warning of Madame Sosostris for her customer to fear death from water.

"The warning lady" as a gendered construct exists due to the social attributions towards speakers of different sexes. Additionally, females are considered the weaker sex, easily scared and always in need of assistance. They are considered to be cautious and not adventurous. They have shrill voices in which they seek help or complain. Breaking away from such gendered constructs should be the aim and purpose of all artists/authors.

"What the Thunder Said"

In this section we find a woman using her hair to produce sound. She pulls her long black hair tight and plays ominous music like a fiddle on those hair strings. The sound awakens the bats. They are unusual bats with the faces of babies whistling at dusk, beating their wings and crawl on a burnt wall:

> A woman drew her long black hair out tight
> And fiddled whisper music on those strings
> And bats with baby faces in the violet light
> Whistled, and beat their wings
> And crawled head downward down a blackened wall
> And upside down in air were towers
> Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours
> And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells. (Eliot 434-441)

Additionally, in the following stanza in this section:

> Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves
> Waited for rain, while the black clouds
> Gathered far distant, over Himavant. (Eliot 454-456)

The poet focuses on the eastern part of the world and discusses the holy river Ganga in India. When the rain comes and the Ganges overflows, it symbolises the progenity of the east while the west has lost its fertility and has become the real *wasteland*.

Conclusion

The Waste Land, with its multi-layered complexity, is a seminal text which offers a harsh critique of modern society. It surpasses Bhaktin's division of work of art as monologic/dialogic who wrote that "The poet "must assume a complete single-personed hegemony over his own language, he must assume equal responsibility for each one of its aspects and subordinate them to his own, and only his own, intentions" ("Discourse in the Novel" 297).

The use of voice in this polyphonic, dialogic narrative poem is significant for understanding the many easter eggs Eliot left for his readers to decipher in the form of allusions, symbols, motifs or history. The female figures do not have any voice in the text but they do create noise; either with their hair or with their ominous cards; either with their identity crisis or with their toxic dependence; either with their unemotional and dissatisfied sexual act or with their vanity; either with their helplessness or with their limitedness. The text fails to offer them a space to explore and to speak.

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Trenches in the Mind: *The Waste Land* and Eliot's Confrontation of the Great War

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Abstract: Some recent accounts of T. S. Eliot's behaviour during the Great War has presented him as negative and playing safe. Vincent Sherry's *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* describes him as essentially an 'opportunist', assiduously networking and avoiding trouble during the war years. This paper will argue that not only was Eliot deeply affected by his experiences of being in wartime England but there is a need to re-evaluate the role of *The Waste Land* in the complex relationship between a confrontation with the traumas of the First World War and modernism's aesthetic strategies—in exploring the visceral psychological scars of War which in turn establishes the larger role of the poem in exploring its aesthetic impact beyond the specific post-WWI context. The paper builds on the work of scholars such as Carl Krockel to contextualise Eliot as a First World War modernist poet but also brings into play a comparative analysis with some examples of Eliot's other writings such as *Hollow Men* and, most crucially, a letter of detailing the horrors of the trenches he published in *The Nation magazine* in June 1917. This paper will develop a nuanced reading of Eliot's impact as a war poet, *The Wasteland* and its implications for understanding modernist and, specifically, American voices of the Great War.

Keywords: First World War, War Literature, T.S. Eliot, Trauma, Psychoanalysis, Poetics

When describing the perfect embodiment of the conceptual problem posed by war literature Samuel Hynes uses the anecdote of an American squad out on a night patrol in Vietnam from which only one wounded survivor managed to return to base. The wounded soldier dies before telling his comrades what happened to him and the squad. To Hynes's mind, this instance of a non-existent narrative perfectly illustrates one of the central issues when dealing with the

representation of War and its trauma in literature (15). The unanswerable question of 'what happened out there?' forms the central existential premise of writing aimed at communicating the trauma of armed conflict: one had to be there to understand the horror truly. The inaccessibility of uncommunicable trauma lends a unique frame to wartime literature. Hynes compares the witnessing of Modern War to a form of travel writing, documenting a psychological as much as a physical journey into the literal and metaphorical terrain of the warzone, with the exception that this 'destination' has been rendered inaccessible in time and space to future readers. To truly understand, you had to be there. However, Hynes's focus on a certain authenticity of experience when contemplating War may strike one as too limiting in delineating the nuances and complexities of the literary and cultural responses to major traumatic events.

The First World War was a uniquely traumatic event in the European psyche as the reality of industrialised mass slaughter on a global scale rendered moot all previous notions of heroism, gallantry, resilience and a more extensive understanding of the civilisational ethos of the West. The experience of modern War in this context unravelled the underlying social fabric and the grand narratives considered to be Western civilisation's hallmarks. The brutal realities of the trenches posed a severe conceptual challenge and created an imperative to reconceive an understanding of the Western world. In his seminal text, The Great War and Modern Memory, Paul Fussell makes a case for a creative rejuvenation of irony as a literary trope and conceptual tool to grapple with all the Great War had revealed and undone about realities of the modern world (4). In this vein, Vincent Sherry argues that postwar modernism was primarily a set of conceptual and aesthetic strategies to break from 19th-century traditions, which were rendered hopelessly outmoded for the 20th century, and to confront the anxieties produced by the experience of four years of catastrophic global War (11).

In reading the Welsh poet David Jones's poem *In Parenthesis*, Samuel Hynes concurs with Fussell and Sherry's view of how the Great War exposed the fault line and fundamental gap between an idealised notion of the world as it existed that last 'golden summer of 1914' and everything the 20th century would inflict on Europe after. The naivete of the British Army's traditional officer caste charging their hapless cavalry into the face of German machine gun nests at the outset of the War perfectly captures the irony of how the Great War was about to dramatically change the presumptions of the world about not just the conduct of conflict, but the very fundamental questions of the ontology of the human psyche brought under the enormous strain of grasping the changes wrought by history (Hynes 34). In taking a longer-term view of the literary and cultural impact of the Great War, it becomes crucial to truly understand the gravity of the problem of comprehension that artists faced at the time to articulate their understanding of the world after the traumas of 1914-1918. Sherry includes a long list of illustrious writers, including D.H. Lawrence, W.B. Yeats, James Joyce and T.S. Eliot, among others, who did not directly experience combat but were forced to re-imagine their postwar literary production with intimate confrontations with the legacies of the War. The anxieties produced by the demands placed on the literary scene by the contemplation of what the War had taken away and what the effects of the War demanded of the writer to confront in this new world was one of the underlying preoccupations of Eliot's writing in the aftermath of 1918.

For him, the conceptual challenge posed by the horrors of 1914-1918 required not only a rejection of the high-flung rhetoric of nationalism but also a new artistic and expressive schema to transcend the ‘prosaic’ and 'political' witness narratives of the war poets such as Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon among others. Reviewing E.B. Osborn's book *The New Elizabethans* in the magazine he edited, *The Egoist*, Eliot described fascination with the youthful dead as a form of dangerous sentimentality. This missed the larger truths and

revelations of the Great War to reproduce the same heightened emotions that allowed Europe to 'sleepwalk' to catastrophe in 1914. He felt the need for a 'superhuman honesty' to rebuild the artistic oeuvre, possibly literary language, to capture the new realities and contradictions in the postwar world (Krockel 95). Eliot dismissed two kinds of rhetoric, the first being the sentimental narratives of Rupert Brooke and Edmond Rostand and the second being the works of writers like Herbert Read and Sassoon. Eliot reportedly enjoyed Read's 'Naked Warriors', documenting his *lived experiences* in the trenches, but lamented the lack of a 'musical quality' to the verse (Krockel 96). For Eliot, the need to craft a narrative strategy that is not merely shackled to contemporary history but engages in a more holistic conversation with his conception of Tradition in a bid to seek out a more fundamental yet elusive 'truth-value' to contextualise the particular historical moment at War's end was paramount (Krockel 98).

How far was Eliot, the artist, able to base his work on this prescription? I would argue that the transformation of the deeply personal into the dissociated outward narrative thrust of his symbolism achieves the act of contextualising history while revealing a seminal tension and anxiety between the personal and the impersonal and, by extension, between repression and expression. Critics such as James Olney and A.D. Moody have argued that the narrative structure of a poem like *The Waste Land* is built around nodes of deeply personal experiences which, through the overlay of symbolic signification, proceeds towards a more significant generalisation while Hugh Kenner holds that in doing so, *The Waste Land* presents the reader with a singularly neurotic dream structure that makes explicit the psychological defence mechanism haunted by trauma (qt in Krockel 102). For Eliot, the War at the outset presented a unique difficulty, first as a non-combatant (he has rejected enlistment to the US Navy on medical grounds), and secondly through the artistic repercussions of his inner conflicts stemming from his difficult personal life with his wife Vivien at the time. “'For Eliot, the

postwar world is marked by a loss of heroism, economic depression and the threat of foreign invasions…it is difficult to decide where reality stops and anxiety begins" (Tearle 104).

For Eliot, not having served in a combat role was one possible source of anxiety. However, he makes clear that being on the Home Front in England did not inure him from the enormous mental strain of wartime. At a fundamental level, Eliot perceived that the anxieties produced by contemplating the existential ramifications of the Great War were no less for a soldier than a civilian (Krockel 89). In a letter to his mother from 1917, Eliot acknowledged the profound changes wrought in his psyche by the continued War. He writes, 'We are all immeasurably and irremediably altered over here by the last three years' (Eliot qtd. in Krockel 89).' In envisioning the nerve-wracking tension of life amidst the 'swarming' masses of wartime London, between the strain of overwork at Lloyd's Bank, his wife's affair with Bertrand Russell and the latter's imprisonment due to his pacifism, Eliot's mental life-world was caught in a quagmire of anxieties, disillusionments and repressions as he manoeuvred (often unsuccessfully) through this psychological minefield. In a letter to Eleanor Hinkley, he believes the War created a 'double unreality' that juxtaposed the trauma of the trenches with the seemingly intolerable anxieties and privations of wartime civilian life (qtd. in Rabaté 13).

Eliot was most certainly personally aware of and confronted with the visceral realities of trench warfare as he had published his brother-in-law, Maurice Haigh-Wood's, letter detailing his experiences of serving in France. Additionally, working in the Colonial and Foreign Department at Lloyd's Bank, specifically overseeing accounts dealing with German reparations, Eliot was uniquely aware of the financial and territorial repercussions of the Treaty of Versailles that some of the other soldier-poets may not have had the exposure to appreciate (Sherry 18) fully. This also placed him at a juncture to fully grasp the sheer skullduggery of the Allied treatment of Germany, making him that much more critical and disillusioned by the high-flung rhetoric of Woodrow Wilson. "History has many cunning

passages, contrived corridors/And issues," Eliot wrote in his poem *Gerontion* (qtd. in Sherry 18), which can arguably be read as a prologue of sorts to *The Waste Land*. The 'contrived corridors' he refers to is the Polish Corridor carved out of the German Empire to give the newly independent Poland access to the Baltic Sea through the port of Danzig, thereby dissolving West Prussia in the aftermath of Versailles. His similar allusion to a 'wilderness of mirrors' in the same poem is a likely reference to the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles Palace, where the peace treaty was signed. His keen awareness of the new global political order and the historical moment in 1919 also seeps into *The Waste Land* as Countess Marie Louise Larisch vehemently affirms her origin as a German of Lithuania, now no longer a part of the erstwhile Russian Empire, in the opening stanza (Eliot 57).

Disillusionment with the world at large, specifically with the stark reality behind the rhetoric of the Allies' supposed 'defence of civilisation' indelibly marked Eliot's understanding of the postwar world order. Far from the reaffirmation of a Western civilisational ethos, the Great War left the hollowness and ugly reality of the imperialistic avarice at the heart of the Western world. Despite the narrator's distance from the battlefront in *Gerontion*, he too is indelibly shaped by the conflict, and in speaking of "Unnatural vices/Are fathered by our heroism," the poem forces one to ponder how a good intention may be perverted to unnatural vice (Sherry 21). These topical references in Eliot's verse suggest a more complicated relationship between the poet and his historical context than one of merely symbolically channelling Tradition to create a dissociated aesthetic contribution to literature.

While *Gerontion* presages some of the fissures and tensions present in Eliot's narratives and his representation of the world, discussion of the Great War's bearing on *The Waste Land* can only be thought through after looking at Jean Verdenal. Introduced to Eliot during the latter's sojourn in Paris in 1911, his death in 1915 during the Gallipoli campaign left an enormously traumatic effect on T.S. Eliot. Through all the layers of intertextual

references and complex symbolism, the trauma of War and the spectre of Verdenal haunts the text of *The Waste Land*, and for Eliot, the epitome of personal loss in the War is embodied in Verdenal's death. It appears in the nature of a subtle echo that a reader may perceive as marking the underlying melancholy of the world Eliot envisions in his poem. It is, in some fundamental ways, one of the significant factors that make *The Waste Land*, in Helen Gardner's opinion, topical regardless of Eliot's intentions (qtd. in Tearle 108). Eliot's vision of the postwar world is drained of a particular vital spirit, seemingly affirming Henri Bergson's diagnosis of the modern condition, essentially marked by a series of absences. For Jean Michel Rabaté, this locates *The Waste Land* squarely into the category of being a quintessentially postwar modernist poem (9). The postwar world is thus essentially marked by a series of conspicuous absences. For instance, Eliot presents a pristine Thames of Edmund Spenser's day by paradoxically focusing on the detritus of man-made garbage (Eliot 59). Purity is presented by its conspicuous absence. So too, are the presumably young men who left behind the aftermath of sexual encounters of long-gone summer nights, which in turn brings into the reader's midst the scale of loss through the youth consumed by the conflict (Eliot 60).

The dissipated world of sprouting corpses, which forces the narrator to confront just how many 'death had undone' functions both as a reference to Dante's confrontation with the lost souls in Purgatory while simultaneously grappling with the staggering losses incurred during the War. Eliot's style consistently builds on his thesis in *Tradition and the Individual Talent* in terms of locating his poetic imagery within a longer tradition of Western literature as a means of making sense of the seeming senselessness imposed by the pyrrhic victory of the First World War for Britain, and in doing so successfully encodes the more traumatic memories of the same (Rainey 39). Krockel takes recourse to Shoshana Felman's conception of 'silenced memory' to analyze the underlying narrative of *The Waste Land*. Felman's concept argues that trauma has a complex and subtle mode of infusing the life of the survivor. Silence

then provides the underlying structure to read the presence of a loss in a significant way embodied by Verdenal in the text. Phlebas, the drowned Phoenician sailor goes through a metaphoric process of grief and loss as "He passed the stages of age and death/Entering the whirlpool (Eliot 66-67)." Here again, we see the juxtaposition of a language borne by the literature of the past in a bid to both shield and experience the intimacy of grief borne by the fractured reality of the present as the whirlpool of Scylla and Charybdis from *The Odyssey* intermingles with the echoes of Verdenal's death. Phlebas is probably the closest direct reference to Jean Verdenal that Eliot includes in the section titled 'Death by Water', a fitting evocation of the fact that Eliot had believed that his friend had died by drowning in the Dardanelles (Krockel 105). Similarly, Krockel reads the imagery of the hyacinth garden as a combination of the Ancient Greek myth of the tragedy of Hyacinthus and Apollo, wherein Apollo's beholding the tragic loss of his love by the actions of Zephyr overlay the floating spectre of a drowned Verdenal in the water (104).

There appear dual impulses within the narrative structure between creating its own uniquely imagined space while simultaneously obliquely attempting to channel the traumatic losses of the War. "Verdenal and the dead of war form the ordering silence of *The Waste Land*" (Krockel 104). Eliot was more forthcoming in his 1934 commentary on the poem, where he revealed that his reference to lilacs in the poem was intimately connected with his memories of his friend and their time in Paris, where Verdenal was fond of the flowers (Krockel 106). "Anxiety and conflicting legacies of traumatic memories serve as the narrative voice while structuring the transitions between the voices that form the poem as a whole (Krockel 105)." While these fragments are, in turn, infused into the discursive stream of literary history by being in continual conversation with the Western canon, roving between Dante and St. Augustine and others, the twin impulses of melancholy and mourning remain at the heart of the text. Krockel analyses this by bringing the Freudian conception of

'melancholia' and 'mourning' into his analytical frame, here the former indicates an internalization of the ego and consequent dissipation of libidinal energy and the latter is understood as an outward movement of the ego to digest the manifest reality of terrible loss. In a sense, Eliot may be perceived as grappling with the loss of Verdenal through a complex interplay of victimhood and survival (Krockel 94-96). Cathy Caruth, when discussing trauma memory, theorised the existence of a 'double telling' which marks the narratives of the traumatic event as an oscillation between the extremes of a 'crisis of death' in the trauma of confronting the catastrophic event properly and a 'crisis of life', confronting the implications of surviving the event and the guilt associated with recuperating from loss and processing trauma (qtd. in Krockel 107).

To this, Eliot adds his unique artistic form in the form of an aesthetic contemplation of the postwar world in a series of allusions to canonical texts while also fashioning an intimate psychological defence mechanism to create a space for himself in his poet persona to access and comprehend his personal wartime trauma. He creates layers of irony and allusions which encode these oscillating impulses. Trauma can thus be integrated into an outward narrative. In this context, we get the double images with which *The Waste Land* is replete, which both subvert and subsume the text in narrative moments by evocatively bringing past and present into a single frame. Thus, the barren land of the wounded primordial Fisher King is brought into sharp contrast with Lil's fecundity while also overlaying her sexual infidelity and self-destruction from a dubious abortion in the context of Albert's demobilization and the emotional wreckage that both of them have to confront at War's end (Eliot 62-63). Demobilization is consistently overlaid by the dissipation of the vital energy of the human psyche and the demoralization of the postwar world captured in the death of eros seen in the sexual encounter between the typist and the clerk or in the ironic subversion of rebirth within the image of the wolf 'resurrecting' a corpse by digging it up. Images and times bleed into one

another as the wolf signals the anti-landscape, simultaneous rot, and symbolic rebirth (or resurfacing) of No Man's Land while referencing John Webster's *White Devil*. In contrast, the image of the ancient Roman victory over Carthage at Mylae during the First Punic War serves to actualize the spectre of the catastrophic Gallipoli campaign.

In the final section of *The Waste Land*, titled *What the Thunder Said*, Eliot contemplates the crisis of Western civilization by turning towards the East, borrowing from the Upanishads to sketch a field of possibility for rejuvenating the world. Eliot quotes from Hermann Hesse's text considering Dostoevsky, titled *The Brothers Karamazov* and *the Downfall of Europe*, where he refers to the upheaval in Eastern Europe in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution as a seemingly irrational eruption (Eliot 68-70). However, Rabaté argues that in referencing Dostoevsky, both Eliot and Hesse are confronting a fundamentally Nietzschean conundrum, in the immediate sense posed by the implications of the Russian Revolution, that being the need for a genuinely transcendental conceptualization of politics to combat the bourgeois complacency which allowed the 'sleepwalkers' of Europe to go to War in 1914 (15). Eliot's methodology of the outward narrative makes sense of wartime as being a part of the hysteria of a Dostoevsky novel but acknowledges that the paradoxical awakening of spirituality may indeed lie in the rupture of fixed values. To conclude the discussion of analyzing Eliot as a war poet (or possibly, more appropriately, a poet of War), I return to a critical formulation given by Samuel Hynes. He made a distinction between War as preconceived by the people yet to experience the realities of wartime versus the actuality of War, a defining characteristic to comprehend an experience as disruptive as War. For the American teenagers caught up in the draft and sent to Vietnam, that 'war in the head' (to use Hynes's phrase) was shaped by John Wayne movies.

In contrast, the English public-school boys of 1914 were raised on a steady diet of Walter Scott novels and tales of the Duke of Wellington during the Napoleonic Wars of the

previous century (Hynes 56). Tradition here crafted a lens through which the horrors of combat reality were filtered. In that sense, Eliot represents a unique modernist moment in his use of the language of allusion and Tradition to comprehend War in its aftermath, but therein indelibly, in turn, infusing the traumatic moment in turn with his own 'individual talent'.

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The Waste Land and its Cinematic Afterlives: Critical Analysis of Select Diegetic Readings of the Poem

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Abstract: The cinematic arts unconsciously collect a sense of tradition yet somehow manages to merge it with a sense of modernity and novel ideas and techniques ("Tradition and Individual Talent"). In "The Waste Land", the poetic voice constantly changes, yet the adaptations try to bring in the sense of temporal continuity by rearranging texts and creating dialogue. The present paper attempts to analyze the on-screen adaptation of the poem in the form of a dramatized film narration. It will try to find how these adaptations carry a sense of tradition and create a new space for themselves. Additionally, there is an attempt made to understand how the narration and the narrating act of the poet/artist/performer interfere with meaning production. The three films used in the following analysis are Deborah Warner's adaptation of the poem, W. M. Rhine's adaptation and Fiona Shaw's performance at Madison Square Garden, New York City. The paper also seeks to answer whether, by using the narratological theory, one can see these adaptations as the "afterlives" of the iconic poem or not.

Keywords: Adaptation, Tradition, Modernity, Performance, Ideal Order, Narrativity, Creativity

The complex range of aesthetic innovations and the presence of an overwhelming encyclopaedism make the poem a complex text to read. The poem entails a non-narrative composed of five sections. The verses deliberately flaunt a profusion of dense allusions, obscure mythological references, disparate utterances, and many multi-lingual citations. Thus

making it not only a challenging read but a prime representative of one, modernist poetics and two, Eliot's idiosyncratic vision of the role of an individual poet within literary history. Conclusively, making *The Waste Land* a problematic text to adapt on-screen.

Literary critics have argued that the poem's fragmented structure co-relates to the effect of cinematic montage; there has been a dearth of actual on-screen adaptations of the same (McCabe, Trotter, Chintz). But however scarce they may be, all of them reflect something novel and literary. Despite the massive popularity of Eliot's poem and their "cinematic" potential, only a select few (like "The Live Song of Alfred J. Prufrock") have been used diegetically and that too in the background (Chinitz 78, 80; Shamriz). Moreover, David Trotter, in his 2006 article "T. S. Eliot and Cinema," delineated how Eliot was inspired by cinema and how "The Waste Land" carries some of its imprints as far as the cinematic technique (like montage) is concerned. In other words, the complex range of aesthetic innovations and the presence of numerous allusions and references are as much a result of Eliot's use of popular and high culture as cinema as an art form.

To borrow Martin Scorsese's words, cinematic art forms offer "aesthetic, emotional and spiritual revelation" under "the unifying vision of an individual artist," an artist, as Bob Dylan said, was "heroic and visionary" (Scorsese). In the same vein, an adaptation of literary works on-screen adds a dual layer to the text—the literary text is reinterpreted by the director's vision. In the latter's case, the auteur (often a director) engages in a co-creative conversation with the literary author to illuminate the hidden recesses and further the scope of the former. The result ultimately remains the same—to seek and understand how works of art and literature capture, reflect and transform the said/unsaid aspects of the human condition.

Each of the three adaptations has successfully fulfilled this criterion; they are experimental and entail critical observations and commentaries of the contemporary world. The auteurs provide space to the character/s in the adaptations, which are then seen

investigating themes around the essence of being a human being. The frames are set in a manner that there is a visible longing in the faces of the artists who are busy exploring—what it means to be a human being, either by internal or external focalization (from facial cues, body language, and makeup to patched up transitional images to the narrative, cityscapes and backdrops). The audience generates and interprets meaning in relation to themselves, society, and evolution.

Narratology is the scientific theory that constructively and analytically aims at understanding the narrative and structure. Additionally, it also focuses on how the narrative affects human perception. For a narratological analysis, it is customary to study and work with the triadic set of—*text, fabula* and *story.* While the literary text encompasses all written words, the films have moving images usually accompanied by sound. A narratological analysis is not only a mere attempt to study the nature of the text but rather an act of perusing texts and examining them as a concept and cultural practice. Gerrard Genette, in his seminal book *Narrative Discourse*, encapsulates the idea that the focus should not be limited to the tale but the way it is told (Barry 231).

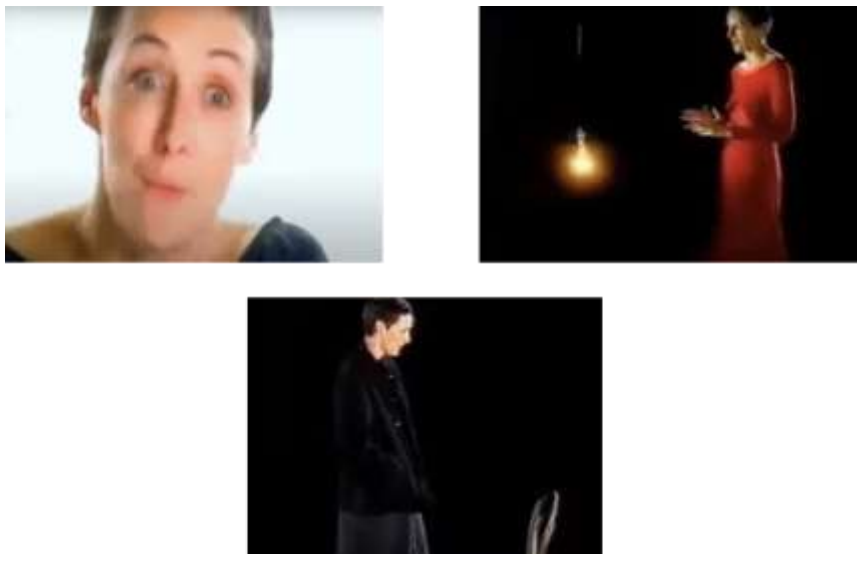
Genette discusses two types of narrative modes: mimetic and *diegetic* (Barry 231). The mimetic mode *shows* rather than *tells*. It is dramatized writing, presented to the reader in a more 'scenic' way. The latter is a non-dramatized narrative, which is 'non-scenic' and presented to the reader in an expeditiously summarizing manner. In practice, writers use both modes in tandem, similar to how Eliot has fashioned his complex narrative in this poem.

On objectively and critically addressing the statement, the cinematic arts unconsciously collect a sense of tradition and somehow merge it with a sense of modernity similar to Eliot's allusive poetics demonstrated in *The Waste Land.* Eliot expands on this poetics in his seminal essay *Tradition and Individual Talent*: "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone […] His significance, his appreciation of his reaction to the

dead poets" (38). Therefore significantly points out the idea that poetic individuality is not to be found in works of art that strive to isolate or unattach themselves from their history (literary or otherwise) but in works of art in which the voices of their literary ancestors "assert their immortality most vigorously" (38). Additionally, it is critical to note how invention and newness are associated with creativity, without which no new work of art can find its legs and be worthy of appreciation.

A film version of Eliot's poem performed by Fiona Shaw is a new work of art. It is startlingly modern and vastly different from orthodox adaptations. Nevertheless, it successfully carries a sense of tradition with it—the nuances of stage presence from lighting to body language to the cinematography, the inherent theatricality of the live performance in a robust manner capturing richly varied speech utterances and tones, complimenting the simplicity of the backdrop and the gravitas of the recitation.

It is significant to note the shift when a new work of art is created. "Something happens simultaneously to all works of art that preceded it. The existing monuments form an *ideal order* among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (really new) work of art among them" (38).



"The Waste Land" Adapted by Deborah Warner, performance by Fiona Shaw (1995)

The nature of Eliot's "ideal order" has been under much scrutiny. Goldman, while quoting Louis Menand, interprets this "ideal order" in a philosophical manner where he states that "…our perception of the new work of art depends on our perception of the history of art, which takes a certain shape—is idealised in our minds (Goldman 93). Eagleton calls it "radical historical relativism", which is "endowed with a status of classical authority" (Eagleton 147). Eagleton further elaborates upon this by pointing out Eliot's company in his poem *The Waste Land*: Homer, Ovid, Shakespeare, Milton, Baudelaire, Chaucer etc., who are all dead male poets. It is easy to conclude that Eliot's "ideal order" calls for the preservation of a particular kind of literary order, namely "The Western Literary Tradition," which is very far from being democratic and perpetuates an already established cultural-social value and authority. To bolster Eagleton's understanding, it becomes vital to add Susan Lancer's statement from her seminal essay "Toward a Feminist Narratology," where she quotes "Shlomith Rimmon-Kennan, who feels compelled to ask whether she has written "…an introduction or an obituary" to the field (Shlomith 130; Lancer 342). This is because "the narratives which have provided the foundation of narratology have been either men's texts or texts treated as men's text" for example, "Genette's formulation of a "Discours du Recit" on the basis of Proust's *A la lecherche du temps perdu,* Propp's androcentric morphology of a certain folktale, Greimas on Maupassant, Iser on male novelists from Bunyan to Beckett…" etc. (Lancer 343).

The foundation of the argument stated above can be concluded with Fiona Shaw's performances of *The Waste Land*. Her performances break away from this "ideal order" and establish a newness. This newness is crafty and extraordinarily creative. It simply creates a replacement of order without disturbing or taking anything away from the tradition or essence of the poem. It is a feminist stance, directed by a woman, Deborah Warner, and enacted by a woman, Fiona Shaw; the masterpiece is a towering genius. The performance does not limit its audience or the poem's meaning; Fiona's sincerity and intense performance were found to be

inviting. Fiona's performance also kindly reminds us of Sarah Cane's work "Language and form," where she describes the dramatic use of a single voice for multi-voices consciousness.

Fiona's performance is "difficult" yet refreshing. Coming from a woman adds a different sensibility and subjectivity to the narrative. The internal focalisation lets the audience feel Fiona's intention and read her mind. Even in the poem, we find internal focalisation. In the first section, "The Burial of the Dead," when Marie felt free in the mountains with her cousin: "In the mountains, there you feel free" (17); or where the hyacinth girl was not happy with the gift of flowers: "I was neither Living nor dead, and I knew nothing, Looking into the heart of light, the silence" (39). Although most of the third section, "The Fire Sermon", is externally focalised, we find some parts of it to be internally focalised, thus enabling the reader to understand the typist girl's mind "Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass: Well now that's done", and I'm glad it's." (252) or in the same episode, when her lover assaults her, the reader can hear Tiresias' inner feelings, "And I Tiresias have fore suffered all enacted on this same divan or bed; I who have sat by Thebes below the wall and walked among the lowest of the Dead." (246). Focalisation plays a significant role in the process of perception. Information that internal focalisation provides becomes crucial for constructing deeper meanings at the level of memory, the subconscious and emotions.

It is commonly believed that the disparate parts of the poem have their internal unity and coherence—either due to Ezra Pound's caesarean-like editing or Eliot's creative genius or both—and that coherence gets amplified when the poem is read out aloud by varied persona. Starting with Eliot himself, famous personas like Ted Hughes, Fiona Shaw, Alec Guinness, Bob Dylan, et al. have all brought their unique style into the narration and illuminated the specific hitherto hidden meaning of the poem. The fact remains that a mere change in the gender of the speaker, male or female, shifts the narration's emphasis. Fiona's performance puts a female under the spotlight. A female's performance demands attention, a

female's performance demands interpretation, a female performer redirects and reinterprets a man's work of art, a female performer stands and takes command in the middle of the busiest city in the world etc. Thus successfully, it not only keeps up with the tradition and adds to it, but it also highlights her individual talent.

Most importantly, it brings a female, her performance, her role in art and as an artist and her subjectivity to the forefront. As Gennette, in his *Narrative Discourse*, states that the focus on how the tale is told is more important than what the tale is about. A woman's narrating act has the ability to tell the tale of her lived experiences which have usually been overlooked.

Fiona Shaw, performing at Madisson Square Garden, NYC

Fiona Shaw, performing at Madisson Square Garden, NYC

Fiona’s first performance of the poem uses external focalisation on a larger scale. The change of costume for each section and the use of lighting, chair and minimalist curtain backdrop adds to the tone of the poem recital. It utilises colour theory to appropriate responses and reception. Fiona's second performance in Maddison Square Park, NYC, is an actual theatrical performance without any costume or backdrop changes. The city's atmosphere, like NYC, is used to address the cityscape Eliot paints in his poem. The popular culture today in NYC may have, to some extent, replaced London and now can represent all things commercial, degeneration of religion and a place where intellectual mobility of women and the working class is easily noticed etc. NYC can be seen imbricating Baudelaire's City of nightmarish encounters, Dante's hell, or what London was when Eliot worked in the financial district as an underwriter. While scene six of Rihane's adaptation uses a single phrase, "Unreal City," a repetition of scene three (10:00-10:33), the intensity of the phrase can encapsulate Eliot's idea

of 'the city' with the help of the simultaneous shot of flies on the garbage follows into the remaining three scenes.

Fiona Shaw reciting “The Waste Land” for the software application, 2011

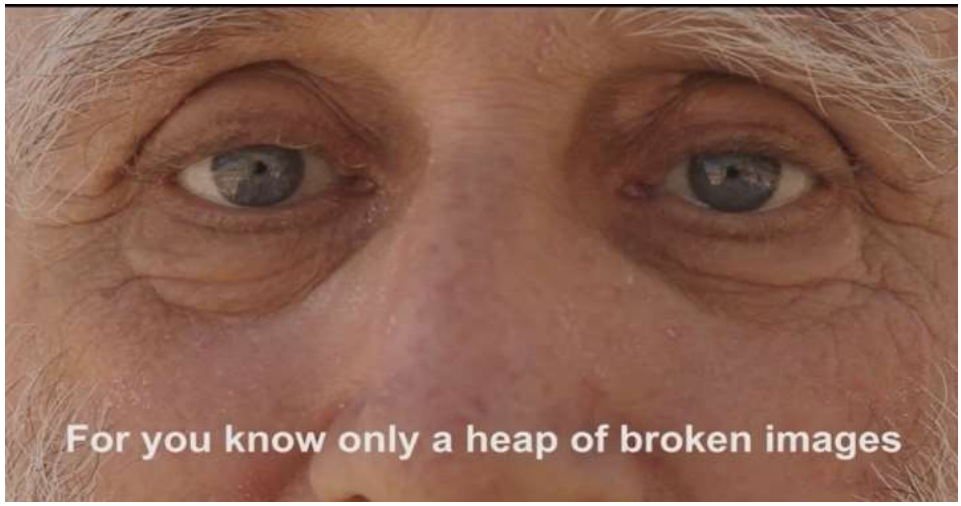
Additionally, the same narrator can adopt an entirely new narration style over the years, spawning yet another line of interpretation. For instance, Fiona Shaw's 1995 dramatised narration of the poem, with her multiple costume changes in her youth, is starkly different from the 2011 narration she did for *The Waste Land* application. In the latter, the ageing Shaw delivers the lines with a freshness devoid of any ostentatious narration, which is almost conversational. That is to say that the ebb and flow of narration, with its closeness to actual human speech, illuminates other more intimate aspects of human relationships, which are sometimes not too apparent in the ordinary silent reading of the poem.

Fiona Shaw reciting "The Waste Land" for the software application, 2011

Walid M. Rihane's *The Waste Land* adaptation can be seen as an interpretation or a more extensive commentary on the contemporary world. Presently, Rihane is the Education Department Coordinator at the Lebanese International University and an Academic English Instructor at Haigazian University, Lebanon. He conceptualised the screenplay and directed the short film to fulfil the requirement for his bachelor's in communication arts degree from the Lebanese International University in 2015. The academic influence is visible in the kind of silence and the breakdown/lack of communication that the adaptation deals with.

Through a series of eight scenes, each separated by an all-black transition and no extraneous dialogues except for Eliot's own recorded voice, the carefully selected and excised lines of the original poem highlight the desolation, dreariness, and spiritual death of human life in "moving" images viz. emotions and movement of scenes. Eliot had recorded "The

Waste Land" in a dull and ominous newsreader-like voice that appears to spell doom for humanity and does not offer any solace, just like the poem itself. Further, by giving the original poet's sole narrative space and not including any extraneous dialogue, Rihane's cinematography adds another layer of contemporaneity to this 20th-century masterpiece. For instance, Rihane's film begins with Tiresias, the most crucial figure in the poem, walking in a barren landscape with Eliot's ominous voice, "what are the roots that clutch…son of man…broken image" in the background (0:41-2:15). This sets the tone for a parched and hopeless future. A future where humankind has and will "know only a heap of broken images.



Tiresias walking in a barren desert with empty and haunted eyes.

Rihane's interpretation is "difficult," similar to Deborah's. For Eliot, "difficult" is a necessary poetic response to the diverse nexus of historical, cultural and philosophical contexts of the early twentieth century: the wreckage that the first world war brought; the transformation/s of human subjectivity in a quickly developing industrialisation; the post-Darwinian erosion faith; evolution of science rewriting the concepts of space, time and reality etc. These motifs and symbols called for different poetic assembly and construction measures. According to Eliot, the modern poet needed to recognise the call of time and replace the traditionalist realist models of representation with avant-garde Modernist poetics that will "dislocate" language into meaning by an indirect association process. Thus, in Eliot's terms, the poet can be allusive, multiple and estranged.

Deborah adds newness by using a female narrator to the literary history and the literary canon, while Rihane uses various shots and selective lines from the poem to add modern taste and sensibility. Similarly, scene two of Rihane's adaptation shows a contemporary Madame Sosostris reading her Tarot cards and foreseeing the destruction of the entire city/country in a gruesome civil war akin to the hunt of an antelope by a pride of hungry and savage lions (Rihane 2:16-4:18). It reminds the readers of the horrors of the first World War that Eliot himself faced and how since then every civil or intercontinental war has become more lethal and automatic.

However, Rihane goes beyond the literal meaning to suggest the global impact of pollution and climate change on human lives and civilisation. Thus, the exhaustion on Madame Sosostris's face and the prophetic mouthing of "fear death by water" appears incongruous until the scene with a massive Tsunami-induced-flood appears. At this point, its connection with the real-life Fukushima nuclear disaster of 2011 becomes quite apparent. Also, the fact that the Tsunami appears in "A Game of Chess" section of the poem with a

beautiful young woman suffering a "mental breakdown" shows the damaging extent of depression as well as relates it to Eliot and Vivienne's biographical details.

Madame Sosostris with her tarot cards and mobile phone & a heap of plastic and garbage lying in dumpsters.

Similarly, Rihane depicts another attractive middle-aged woman in a club for whom the clock is ticking. She is as lonely as her youthful predecessors. At the same time, the voices and her own smile are hollow and full of pain (Rihane 7:33-9:57). The beads of sweat on her face and her apparent reluctance to move amidst the montage of more bombs and destruction depict that perhaps she is also afraid of dying alone. Even the rose bloom reverses in time to become a bud again. That is, her beauty is left unappreciated (Rihane 8:15-8:18). Similarly, when the female worker is bombarded with mechanical and forced sex, Rihane uses the montage of the copulation of snails to contrast the banality of human relationships, which are otherwise procreative in nature (Rihane 10:34-12:39).

Her hollow smile results from the same spiritual hollowness Eliot once warned of. Truly enough, in the ultimate scene (once again in the desert), the characters are shown as being unaware of the presence of the bloodied Christ (Rihane 12:43-15:08). The messiah is failing to keep up with his flock for whom he has been carrying the cross ever since. The film's beginning and end in the desolate desert link Tiresias and Madame Sosostris as prophetic figures who know what the world will and has come to. This also shows that unlike the character of Madame Sosostris in the poem, who does not know how to tell the correct fortune, Rihane's Madame Sosostris is a real clairvoyant.

Tand the last scene where Christ is unheeded.

Yet, one cannot be sure that this is exactly what Rihane has shown. It is, at best, a conjecture and product of a pattern-seeking mind that wishes to see some logical connection between the disparate montage shots and the scene transitions. And by denying just that, Rihane retains the elusive quality of "The Waste Land" that gives so much joy in arriving at often conflicting and slippery interpretations.

Eagleton has argued that the poem's intentional obscurity is crucial to its meaning. It adds to Eliot's intellectual and ideological elitism (150). Being a part of 'the academic' circle Walid M. Rihane in his adaption continues this obscurity while painting a connection through various images with the current times. Moreover, Rhihane's and Deborah's adaptation of The Waste Land reminds us of Brechtian theory. The spectator knows that what he is watching is fiction and is not driven by an emotional identification so that he can complete the play in his mind. The distance or "alienation" is created deliberately to ensure the audience's involvement in a more intriguing manner giving them space to think and question.

The directors have been able to bring newness as well as creativity to their adaptations. Eliot's poem The Waste Land runs on a similar tangent as its adaptations. We find that all productions are equally obscure yet surprisingly have the ability to maintain their audience; this is because of the editing techniques used and the temporal continuity of the adaptations created by rearranging the texts and creating a dialogue. It is also important to note that the obscurity is not willful. Still, it is a means to ensure the reader/spectator is able to see and visualise reality from new angles and its elements in new juxtapositions. There are baffling transitions on screen, but surprisingly they are able to utilise the alienation technique, simultaneously subverting the mainstream production techniques used for filmmaking to underline the essential Eliotism. Therefore, they have succeeded in being labelled as afterlives of the poem.

Note

The performance of Fiona Shaw at Madison Square Garden was shot by many photographers and journalists. As to who uploaded the video on Youtube is not known. Additionally, to consider it cinematic is also problematic and beyond the scope of this paper. This paper utilises it only for comparison purposes and to lay emphasis on women's narrating activity as a tool for analysis in the field of Feminist Narratology.

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Mapping the Modern Mind: Mental Health Echoes in *The Waste Land*

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Abstract: Parts of *The Waste Land* (1922) were written by Eliot in 1921 while recovering from a mental breakdown at a sea shelter in Margate. Fragments from the poem reflect his vulnerable psychology, originating in continued alienation and disrupted communication: "My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me./Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak." The poem echoes mental health issues as entwined with the urban experience characteristic of modernity, manifested in the generation's fractured sensibility, hampered connection and severed relationships. The paper examines the poem's indirect and direct reflections on mental health through its diversity in content and form. It will observe how the poem connects the various consequences of modernity—alienated identity, disrupted communication, affective disconnect, and ecological crisis—all echoing the generation's disillusionment and mental fragmentation. It will ultimately attempt to understand how the poem transcends temporality to confront the contemporary mental health crisis, providing cues to receive them with more openness and empathy.

Keywords: *The Waste Land*, T.S. Eliot, mental health, modernity, ecological crisis, communication, alienation, fragments, fractured sensibility, relationships.

According to Gabrielle McIntire, *The Waste Land* (1922) can be considered "the exemplary ur-modernist poem," evoking fresh perspectives from its readers while providing social commentary, reflecting the era's most pressing concerns that primarily emanated from the impact of the First World War and industrialisation (2). With this work, Eliot emerged as "a poet who tried to rethink the foundations of the world order" after the War (Rabate 9). The looming threat of a collapse is evident in "London bridge is falling down falling down falling

down" (Eliot 426). However, the poem captures not only the crisis and devastation as consequences of the War and modern civilisation but the urban experience in its entirety—as also manifested in people's fractured sensibility, hampered connection and severed relationships. Sorum notes that meaning-making and communication also became "casualties of the War" (171). This paper examines the poem's indirect and direct reflections on mental health through its diversity in content and form. It will observe how the poem connects the various consequences of modernity—alienated identity, disrupted communication, affective disconnect, and ecological crisis—all echoing the generation's disillusionment and mental fragmentation. It will ultimately attempt to understand how the poem transcends temporality to confront the contemporary mental health crisis, providing cues to receive them with more openness and empathy.

John F. Schumaker argues that the conditions of modernity have given rise to forces, processes, and cultural motivations leading to an enormous mental health crisis in "an age of insanity" (1). He observes that if a culture does not recognise the need for social connectedness, its members will be vulnerable to psychological and emotional disorders (7). *The Waste Land* constantly hints at these factors and processes that cause isolation and psychotic disintegration, as echoed in disrupted communication and unfulfilled relationships among the characters in the poem. However, while the poem was hailed as an embodiment of the disillusionment, alienation and meaninglessness characteristic of its time, Eliot himself called it a reflection of his psychological state (Trosman 709), contrary to his notion of the poet's impersonality as elucidated in his 1919 essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (McIntire 3). Written in 1921, mostly when Eliot was spending time at the Margate sea shelter to recover from his mental breakdown and then in Lausanne, Switzerland, to seek treatment from Dr Roger Vittoz, the poem is considered as "rooted in personal issues and preoccupations" (Gordon 39). These issues included Eliot's struggle for survival as an

American in London. At the same time, his father disapproved of his career choice, his hasty decision to marry Vivienne Haigh-Wood, an Englishwoman, without his parents' consent, his sexual incompatibility with his new wife as she openly confessed to Russell who now became her lover, her ill-health and suffering from "nerves, complicated by physical ailments," his struggle with influenza necessitating complete mental rest, his father's death, and his intense longing for his mother while she was getting older (Eliot qt. Rabate 14). As Eliot described the poem as "the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life," it has also been read as a product of a "reintegrative process following a psychological decomposition" (Trosman 717), valuing artistic creativity for its ability to liberate people from mental suffering.

The poem echoes communication breaches among the characters that influence their personal relationships, thus reflecting the modern condition where humans struggle to connect with themselves or with each other. A. Walton Litz notes the "quintessentially Jamesian experience" at the heart of Eliot's work: "The tragedy is that of one who can perceive but cannot act, who can understand and remember but cannot communicate" (21). In the first section, the "hyacinth girl" (Eliot 36) complains of failed communication as marked by silence, despite good intentions—"I could not/ Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither/ Living nor dead" (38-40)—referring to her inability to communicate the passion which she once felt, while comparing the modern world with a desolate sea of nothingness. In the next section, Madame Sosostris, the famous fortune-teller, predicts crowds of people in the speaker's future, walking aimlessly in circles, reflecting a lack of connection and communication. The reference to crowds continues in the final episode of this section, as the speaker observes people "undone" by death, streaming across the London bridge, as they could barely talk but only "sigh," with their eyes "fixed" on their feet (63-5). While the speaker mentions only contemporary London, it encompasses allusions to Dickens's London

("the brown fog of a winter dawn"), Baudelaire's Paris ("Unreal City"), and Dante's hell ("the flowing crowd of the dead").

The next section, titled "A Game of Chess"—a game involving adversarial relationships, strategic thinking and imagination of other's perspectives – has conversations defined by the title and reinforces the impossibility of a meaningful connection (Sorum 171). The exchange between two women demonstrates failed relationships marked by a lack of emotions and only physical desires at work. One of the women is compared to Philomela from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, who was raped by King Tereus, her brother-in-law, who then cut her tongue so she could not reveal the secret. She took her revenge with the help of her sister and escaped by transforming into a nightingale. Such a comparison suggests the woman's helplessness due to her inability to communicate her laments to the world, where she could only cry to herself over her bleeding wound. What follows are lines from a speaker frustrated by a communication gap, urging her listener to speak to her, reflecting the alienated modern human condition. According to Sorum, "The strange and richly ornamented scene in which the woman sits, a kind of carved queen in a "Chair . . . like a burnished throne" (Eliot 77) provides the setting for a breakdown in communication between the thinking voice of the poem, and the nervous woman" (Sorum 171). This voice is considered to be Vivienne's, alluding to her vulnerable psychological state and her strained relationship with the poet, expecting, in futility, her legal union to lead to empathy (Gordon 46). Her hopes for successful communication are constantly thwarted as she asks questions reinforcing the pervading sense of emptiness—"Do/You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember/nothing?"—only to fetch no answers (Eliot 121-3). Navigating through themes of sexual and worldly pleasures, Eliot illustrates people's cold inaction and passivity devoid of any emotional connection. The next scene continues the sense of frustration and barrenness caused due to the War by representing Lil's failed communication with her husband, a War veteran, leading

to an unhappy marriage despite her prolonged suffering. According to Badenhausen, Eliot attempts to suggest the difficulty of traumatised soldiers in reconciling their War experience with civilian life as domestic spaces prove to be "inhospitable" to them (154). The section concludes with Lil echoing Ophelia from Hamlet just before her suicide – "Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night" (Eliot 172) - thus situating the "preceding marital portrait within the tradition of tragic love relationships that have collapsed due to miscommunication, misunderstanding, and a lack of intimacy" (Badenhausen 156).

The dire improbability of fertility and regeneration is underlined in the next section, "The Fire Sermon," as sexual encounters continue to defy any real intimacy. The typist is indifferent to Tiresias's sexual advances, and even though she does not resist them, there is no affective connection between them. The act of lovemaking seems mechanical, just like everything else around them in the modern world, as if it is a chore to be completed—"Well, now that's done, and I'm glad it's over" (Eliot 252). This idea is reinforced by the story of a maid losing her virginity when she lay "supine on the floor of a narrow canoe," as if entirely indifferent— "I made no comment. What should I resent?" (295-9) The sense of meaninglessness continues, alluding to Eliot's experience at the sea shelter—"On Margate Sands, I can connect Nothing with nothing" (300-2). This connection between fertility and land restoration is extended through an enduring image of the Fisher King in the poem, with multiple references to the Arthurian legend. In a note, Eliot expresses his debts to Miss Jessie L. Weston's book on the Grail legend, *From Ritual to Romance*, where she connects the story of the Fisher King to fertility rituals. Fisher King, crippled and impotent due to a magical wound, has desolate, infertile lands and passes his time fishing at a lake until the knight Percival comes and heals him, restoring the land's fertility and becoming the keeper of the Grail. In the third section, the king is "fishing in the dull canal/On a winter evening round

behind the gashouse/Musing upon the king my brother's wreck" (189-91), thus pointing to the society's decadence and the War as the causes of *The Waste Land* he portrays.

Such ruptures in intimacy and communication, many rooted in the War, are aggravated by the pervasive death and disintegration imagery in the poem. Although the First World War forms the backdrop of the poem, the focus is on its devastating effects on bodies and minds, on suffering rather than on its origins (Badenhausen 147-8). The modern world is portrayed as a literal wasteland. Corpses abound in the poem; there's a preoccupation with endings—the end of childhood, death by water, and failed marriages. Nihilism dominates modern life, which lacks any spiritual guidance. The reader encounters the death of nature at the very beginning of the poem, as springtime, usually the period of fertility, is declared the "cruelest month" (Eliot 1). Later, the river, a symbol of life and renewal, is reduced to a "dull canal" (189). Many allusions, like Dante's *Divine Comedy*, are associated with death. In the final section, people suffer, cities are destroyed, and chapels are decayed.

Ruination, however, goes beyond spatial boundaries: "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" (Eliot 430) allude to the speaker's fragmented subjectivity and signify the fractured sensibility of the post-War modern world and the disoriented urban experience. There are five sections with constantly changing speakers, the structure is disjointed, many lines are irregular in rhyme and meter, and the languages used are multiple. Frequently varying voices produce an effect of confusion, urgency and helplessness. While in one section, vernacular is used, another includes musical fragments, such as Spenser's wedding song, a soldier's ballad, a nightingale's chirping and a mandolin tune. Fragmentation is the poem's prominent literary strategy, as evident in its textual fragments, referential excess, and "a heap of broken images" (21-2), mirroring the "modern crowd experience" while also calling the reader out for meaning-making, analogous to "urban rebuilding" (Morrison 30-2). According

to Trosman, the poem itself is an attempt at reintegrating his fragmented self, turning "adversity to poetic advantage" (717).

The poem has been read as a pastiche of different verse forms, combining old formal patterns with a free verse to express its debts to the literary tradition while breaking away from past practices (McIntire I). The repetitions in the poem not only manifest repressed trauma but also attempt to reconstruct subjectivity in a rapidly changing world. The poem is replete with historical references—literary, cultural and artistic—and personal memories, functioning as an elegy to the declining culture while suggesting parallels to the contemporary problems. Badenhausen observes the poem as a "site of mourning," with the "elegiac project" being particularly visible in "Death by Water," posing questions about loss and grieving (152). Bringing fragments from the past into the present, the poem blurs the boundaries of time.

The Waste Land transcends temporal borders to confront the contemporary mental health pandemic. For its own time, it is a path-breaking work in exploring mental health issues in an uncensored way at a time when the focus was on 'moving on,' and mental health issues were hardly discussed. What Eliot went through at that time takes the name of modern-day depression and anxiety. Although Eliot went for therapy, the poem itself is written in a manner that is not clinical or threatening, tackling mental health more directly. The issues echoed in the poem remain relevant even today. The repetition can be seen as "a circumvolution of an endless cycle," symbolising "modern emptiness", thus mirroring a social and cultural criticism that seems to foreshadow the problems of our times (Campbell 26).

The impending ecological crisis against the backdrop of strained communication is echoed in the poem, such as in its references to "brown fog" (Eliot 208) or the river sweating "oil and tar" (266-7). Such imagery shows how modernity has impacted our relationship not only with ourselves and other humans but also with nature: "the fundamental way in which moderns experience themselves and the world is creating the conditions for an environmental

holocaust, and an associated indifference" (Schumaker 155). Our lack of ecological awareness is worsening our "planetary health" and "giving free reign to the modern ecological pathologies," both physical and psychological (Schumaker 156). The outside environmental mirrors and aggravates the psychological crisis within, adversely impacting our relationships. Internalising the threats to our physical world causes ecological anxiety, guilt, despair, and grief.

However, accompanying this pessimistic state of society is hope for survival, regeneration, and a better tomorrow. Morrison observes that *The Waste Land* paves the way for "new ways of ordering, mapping, and governing modern city experience" for "potentially utopian restructurings of modern urbanity" holding "a latent power of revolutionary renewal" (31-32). Even the references to death suggest it is a necessary stop for rebirth. In the allusion to Philomela, for instance, her transformation demonstrates the possibility of a new life after a brutal end. The possibility of redemption is suggested in the allusion to the Hindu mantra of "Datta, Dayadhvam, and Damyatta" to counter mental turmoil with "Shantih," the peace which passeth understanding (Eliot 433-4). The final section of the poem returns to the Fisher King legend and describes the "arid plain" as "behind" him so that he can "set lands in order," thus bringing hope for rejuvenation. Schumaker observes modernity's capacity for "environmental dissociation," which allows for an acknowledgement of environmental threats while keeping them out of their working consciousness (157). Harmony with nature can only be nurtured when people feel more disturbed about the environmental crisis and reach a "conscious state of eco-anxiety" (Schumaker 167). Only by establishing a peaceful connection with nature can we empathise with each other and strengthen our relationship with ourselves.

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Mapping the Contours of Changing Social Spaces in *The Waste Land*

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Abstract: French philosopher Henri Lefebvre emphasized that all space is social in human society. Such social spaces are governed by a system of expectations and responses that are rarely articulated as such because they seem self-evident in everyday life. The paper brings in his concept of social space and relates it with the images of changing social spaces in *The Waste Land*. While TS Eliot mourns the loss of culture and spirituality to the advent of modernism, he also seems to lament the incessantly changing space in the wake of industrialization and capitalism. Besides, this idea of social space can also be thought of in terms of phenomenological space, which implies that lived space and our perception of it are mutually constitutive. Thus, social space changes us as much as we contribute to changing it. *The Waste Land* undeniably cuts across spatiotemporal borders. While its timelessness is often discussed, how it upholds its relevance in space is relatively less discussed. The paper examines how the spatial aspect of the text manifests the poem's thematic universality across national borders.

Keywords: modernity, natural vs artificial, nostalgia for idyllic past objective correlative, phenomenological space, production of social space

Eliot's vision of the modern world is that of an un-livable desolate place. Several images of changing natural spaces indicate this hiatus between the past, which was a reassuring space, and the present, which is listless. The poet uses phrases such as "Winter kept us warm" (5) and "Summer surprised us" (8) when talking about the old days. There are images of children sledging in the mountains. These indicate that changing seasons are used to evoke positive feelings in the speaker. Modernization has changed the physical appearance of the spaces and

the social relations which constituted them; hence, such occurrences do not seem to amuse him anymore. The poem opens with the lines, "April is the cruellest month, breeding/Lilacs out of dead land" (Eliot 1). At another point in the poem, he says, "We who were living are now dying" (329). This death is undoubtedly the physical decay of the land induced by pollutants which are the byproducts of modernity. However, it is also the death of specific social relationships and values which comprised the space before the onset of modernization.

According to Lefebvre, 'nature' has been modified by human activity and, therefore, can be seen as 'produced'. Unlike factory-made products, it is free of any unmistakable stamp of the producer or the process of production and is hence prone to be relegated to the realm of the transcendental (68). *The Waste Land* points towards this produced aspect of nature:

> The river sweats
>
> Oil and tar
>
> The barges drift
>
> With the turning tide
>
> Red sails
>
> Wide
>
> The barges wash
>
> Drifting logs... (Eliot 266-74)

The river is laden with cargo as well as industrial waste. It is perceived as nothing more than a channel of transportation. Furthermore, the very demarcation of natural and urban is more a product of social convention and discourse rather than being something self-evident. To quote Lefebvre, "…nature is being murdered by 'anti-nature'—by abstraction, by signs and images, discourse, as also by labour and its products. Along with God, nature is dying—'Humanity' is killing both of them—and perhaps committing suicide into the bargain" (71). By humanity, Lefebvre means social practice, and indeed, this suicide seems to be the epicentre of Eliot's

lament. Degradation of nature alone might not have been a matter of concern. It is the ensuing change in the public sphere that ails him.

The Waste Land implores us to look at the enormous amount of waste produced both culturally and physically. Before industrialization and in its nascent years, the emphasis was on production. Progress was seen in terms of buildings, products, and innovation. The focus has now shifted to consumption. The waste that we produce is an indicator of our consumption and hence of the quality of our life. *The Waste Land* is a poem about waste comprising not only of the oil and tar and the sandwich papers floating around in the Thames but also people and places that have become useless. The overproduction of material from the previous culture, which we see in the "Game of Chess", is re-conceived as waste since it is plucked from its context and reproduced as a commodity of mass culture. He calls these decorations "withered stumps of time"(104). Even the "brown fog" (207), which is integral to the matrix of its imagery, is an industrial waste. At the same time, its presence contributes to making London the gloomy city that it is.

Space is not an a priori background or context for agents and social actions. It is shaped by social relations and modes of exchange as much as it shapes them. Furthermore, modern space is becoming increasingly social to the extent that it is difficult to distinguish between social and natural space. Eliot talks about the Thames and says, "The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers, /Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends/Or other testimony of summer nights" (178-79). The river bank, apparently a natural space, holds social significance only so far as it is populated with a crowd. In the absence of the people who have littered the river, the river bank is an entirely different space. Ironically, it seems that it is not the death of the river that Eliot is grieving but rather the demise of the social activity which once composed it.

Henri Lefebvre explains how a city is not a unique work of art but a product. The architectural structures which constitute the city and give it a semblance of unity were originally designed and constructed for different social and economic purposes. The expressiveness and unity are imposed on cities in retrospect through art, literature, and tourism discourse. However, cities are constantly being consumed, and their significance is always in flux. There are not one but two London cities in *The Waste Land*. One is the London of ideality frozen in the past, the demise of which Eliot laments. The other is the representational space of London, or in other words, the lived reality. It is strewn with sandwich papers and brown fog, and people engage in futile conversations in bars. It is a space of confusion, aridity, and desolation. The city continually provides the opportunity for further industrialisation and movement away from Eliot's lost London. This feeling of the loss of an idyllic homeland is a universal leitmotif in literature. Nevertheless, was London any different in the past? It was always a lived space continuously making and remaking itself and its people.

Capitalism and industrialisation were significant factors in shaping London. They introduced a new set of social relationships entirely different from those dominant during feudal times. It brought together people from different cities, cultures, and social strata as workers in a homogenizing system. Isolation and unfamiliarity were its byproducts. The fast-paced industrial life also brought about changes in the very nature of the public sphere, which Eliot connects with deteriorating human values and low culture. In "The Fire Sermon," Eliot paints a bleak picture of people working in an office. He pictures them as a shapeless mass, devoid of individuality: "At the violet hour, when the eyes and back/Turn upward from the desk when the human engine waits/Like a taxi throbbing waiting" (215-17). This is undoubtedly a consequence of the changed production system, but London as space is a significant determinant in how these social relationships come to play. Lefebvre says, "[space is] not the outcome of a quality or property of human action in general, or human labour as

such, of 'man', or social organization. On the contrary, it is itself the origin and source—not distantly but immediately, or rather inherently—of the rationality of activity" (72).

The city in *The Waste Land* is not a mere container of the actions that are taking place. It instead makes those actions possible and, to some extent, inevitable. "Itself the outcome of past actions, social space permits fresh actions to occur while suggesting others and prohibiting others. Among these actions, some serve production, others consumption" (Lefebvre 73). The poem talks about smaller spaces within the city. The bars, the typist's room, and the hall in which people are playing chess are all seemingly autonomous enclosed spaces. But Lefebvre's category of social spaces conflates the two distinct categories of private and public space to some extent. The city and the smaller spaces which constitute it interpenetrate each other. Thus, private activities also contribute to the representational space or the lived space of London and vice versa. Seemingly private activities such as the loveless sex in the typist's room, the meaningless banter in the bar, and the hollow ostentatiousness of the wealthy lady's house—all are rationalized by the space in which they are enframed and simultaneously produce the space in which they are taking place.

Regarding the French philosopher Henri Bergson, space can be understood on two levels—one, the conception of space, and two, the perception of space or the lived space (26). The latter, he says, is affected by qualitative differences and can be understood as phenomenological space. On the other hand, the conception of space pictures it as a homogenous background in which every point is a set of coordinates on the map. When Eliot reminisces with nostalgia and says:

> Summer surprised us, coming over to the Starnbergersee
> With a shower of rain, we stopped in the colonnade,
> And went on in sunlight into the Hofgartcn,
> And drank coffee and talked for an hour. (8-11)

For the speaker, Starnbergersee and the cafes in Hofgarten do not merely point on a map. They are associated with peace and prosperity. However, since the two places have changed in the Lefebvrian sense with the advent of capitalism and modern values, they also change in the Bergsonian sense. They are no longer the agreeable places they used to be. The space called home is no more a permanent dwelling associated with the feeling of kinship and familial love. It is rather like the typist's room—a temporary residence that is in shambles. Even the love-making which takes place in this setting is devoid of love and emotion.

In contrast to this is the ostentatious hall in "The Game of Chess", wherein people do not think or talk. The hall feels like a dark, dingy alley despite the numerous sculptures, perfumes, and decorative materials. The childish happiness is gone, and so are the Christian values. Devoid of these, London city does not seem to be the glorious imperial centre that it was in the past but an urban desert.

Descriptions of places are employed to evoke certain feelings. While German cities, Starnbergersee and Hofgarten, are associated with images of people happily drinking coffee and talking, the modern world is associated with the images of an arid wasteland:

> What are the roots that clutch, and what branches grow
> Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
> You cannot say or guess, for you know only
> A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
> And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
> And the dry stone, no sound of water. (Eliot 19-24)

Spaces are objective correlatives for emotions and feelings. The kind of activities that used to take place in the prosperous and cultured Hofgarten cannot take place in modern-day London. It is due to the loss of intellectual culture and Christian values that London seems to be dry and barren. Moreover, by alluding to disparate cultures and places, the text resists

particularity, and London becomes a metonym for any other modern city. Consequently, Eliot's personal grief transmutes into an expansive universal lament on modernity.

Eliot juxtaposes several disparate spaces so that reading the poem becomes an act of traversing these places. The placement of geographically distant spaces together in this way makes the reader's imagination move back and forth between the city and the desert. He talks about the city and equates it to "A heap of broken images, where the sun beats, /And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief, / And the dry stone no sound of water" (22-24). At the same time, he describes the desert in the following words:

> Here is no water but only rock
>
> Rock and no water and the sandy road
>
> The road winding above among the mountains
>
> Which are mountains of rock without water. (331-34)

He is pointing towards the physical similarities between the two geographical points and the similar psychological states that they invoke. To quote Spencer Morrison:

> These symbols do not simply bind urbanity to wilderness zones by foregrounding shared geographical or material features, nor do they link these spaces by reference to standard psychological states; instead, these figurative connections rely upon and elaborate, intricate links between material space and subjectivity itself. (28)

Hence, the text becomes a montage of images exemplifying the complex mental makeup of Eliot and, by extension, that of the modern 'everyman'. This finds echoes in the Confessions of St Augustine: "I wondered, O my God, too much astray from Thee my stay, /in these days of my youth and I became to myself a waste land" (Book II).

The experience of space is always situated in temporality. Our experience of space and time is so convoluted that one cannot be separated from the other. Nevertheless, Lefebvre

argues that "[The] manifest expulsion of time [from space] is arguably one of the hallmarks of modernity" (96). In other words, modernity diminishes consciousness of the passage of time. The changes in the weather, the position of the sun, and other temporal manifestations of nature, which accounted for an essential dimension of space, lose importance. Capitalist values see time as another commodity that can be sold, bought, and measured in terms of money. Lived time loses social interest, and the passage of time is marked and ascertained merely in terms of hours and minutes on measuring instruments. This feeling, I believe, is what runs throughout the text of *The Waste Land*. While the cities located in the past are characterized by a change in seasons and a feeling of joy, present-day London is static. It is an "Unreal City, /Under the brown fog of a winter dawn" (Eliot 61).

Throughout the poem, Eliot hardly ever allows his readers to enter the metropolis in summer. There is a perpetual winter in the text. The only sign of the passage of time is the bartender, who keeps telling the ladies to leave the bar. This loss of interest in the manifestations of time makes the city a different phenomenological space than it was previously. Owing to the worldwide expanse of capitalist values, the loss of the experience of time has become a universal phenomenon.

Lefebvre uses the phrase 'liquidation of history' (122) concerning space in the modern world. Social space has always been and is still in flux. It is more of a palimpsest than an object which can be disintegrated into neat smaller elements and subsequently studied part by part. Modern social space is teeming with anachronisms. While many people migrate from rural to urban spaces for a better life, others find an escape from the complex life of cities in the countryside. Alongside completely mechanized large-scale farms, small-scale organic farms also thrive. There are elements of urbanity in the rural and, at the same time, residues of the rural in cities. By extension, the London city of Eliot's imagination cannot be completely idyllic and jovial. Towards the end of the poem, Eliot asks, "Shall I at least set my lands in

order?" (425) Impelled by a keen nostalgia for the bygone era, the author hopes to reorder the physical and social space of the urban experience, and consequently, life itself. "This question announces the possibility of a future spatial order that repairs the present's fragmentation…" (Morrison 24). Nevertheless, it remains highly questionable if the numerous social and economic networks that prevail today can be erased from space and replaced by new ones to make a move back in time.

Under the spell of the city, which claimed him as a young man and retained him until his death, Eliot made poetry out of London's streets, squares, buildings, and districts. Like many of his other works, *the Waste Land* is soaked in urban imagery. It indexes urban experience in the texture of its spatial images:

> *The Waste Land*'s technique of figuring Eliot's London through the frames of desert and jungle geographies, Eastern and Western spiritual traditions, and historical and literary allusions renders the process of reading city space also one of archaeology…. Superimposed upon the poem's chartable London place-names, these strata situate the city within more broad senses of time and place than simply the London of 1922. (Morrison 26)

The configurations and reconfigurations of social space contribute significantly to both the poem's semantic texture and its complex imagery. The change, like social space, entails a change in different human experiences. Additionally, nostalgia for an idyllic past, the undercurrent of the entire poem, has found expression in literature worldwide. Thus, Eliot's poem ceases to be a period piece and cuts across spatial and temporal borders.

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From April to *Shantih*: Man and Nature in T. S. Eliots's *The Waste Land*

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Abstract: On the basis of an eco-critical perspective, this work aims at investigating the relationship between man and nature in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, illustrating the manner in which it may evolve from deterioration and sterility to a harmonious organic communication, mystically achieved — after a necessary spiritual detachment — in an unreal dimension, where a transcendental plenitude and a genuine nature substitute the emptiness of the modern world. After a succinct introduction, where the necessary coordinates about the text are given, this paper will focus on how man and nature mutually influence each other, describing the landscaped sceneries of a reality completely devoid of ideal values and uniquely devoured by alienation and moral vacuity. Finally, it will unfold Eliot's alternative escape from the emptiness of the modern world and his path towards salvation.

Keywords: Modernism; T. S. Eliot; *The Waste Land*; Ecocriticism; Man; Nature

In their Preface to the undergraduate volume of Oxford Poetry 1926, Charles Plumb and W. H. Auden brazenly stated, "if it is a natural preference to inhabit a room with casements opening upon Fairyland, one at least of them should open upon *the Waste Land*" (Plumb and Auden 3). By reading this concise quotation, one may assume that Eliot's poem is concerned with supernatural and unrealistic features, which linguistically and thematically construct a troublesome but very intriguing text. However, the title does not grant any euphoric preconception since the reader is instantly conveyed the image of a barren scenery which anticipates the rotten condition of a world that is reduced to a mere *land*. Here is the modern land, a wasteland, carefully depicted in every elementary aspect (air, water, earth and fire) and

proposed as the emblem of a decayed, sterile universe where man will never achieve regeneration.

> This was the consequence of the pressure of the new and more advanced technologies and also of the dramatic changes in the greatest urban spaces of the early twentieth century (Levenson 88). Admirably recording these latter, and denouncing the sense of inhuman desolation which pervades London, Eliot's poem also represents his personal and poetic journey from empirical involvement to spiritual meditation and mysticism, that 'visionary power' which allowed him to "transcend the 'normal equipoise' and perceive the 'systematic' interconnectedness of all things, earthly and ethereal, past and present" (Childs, pref.).

Indeed, *The Waste Land* bequeaths a dismal atmosphere which is actually the air that each huge modern *polis* can breathe, an aesthetic and spiritual desolation which unleashes vivid and transient images, distills brief pure moments of commotion, but continues to point out the presence of unnamed people with sordid and feeble pleasures, of indistinct individuals with failed ideals, of a mock reality devoid of any coherence or seriousness, where men are completely separated from their own lives (Wilson 102-06).'The Burial of the Dead', the first section of the poem, introduces the civilisation of *The Waste Land*, one which oddly considers April "the cruellest month" (line 1), incapable of rejoicing in the new birth and regeneration that warm spring will bring, preferring, on the contrary, the barrenness of the dead winter and the frigid atmosphere of a world where generation is not possible. The usual connection between April and the rebirth of Nature is therefore cracked. The title of the section seems to highlight this fracture through its multiple references to a mournful circumstance: 'The Burial of the Dead' specifically indicates the memorial service celebrated according to the Anglican rite (whose appellation is *The Order for The Burial of the Dead*). It also mythologically evokes the burial of the effigy of the god, which represented a pledge of a resurgence in the fertility

rites. Still, notably, the headline relates to the burial of the dead in the modern world as a metaphorical sepulture of *hollow men* who refuse to awaken to the drama of life (Serpieri 84).

In the squalid atmosphere of *The Waste Land*, which "suggests that as the city lost touch with the land, with the rhythms and the psychic nourishment of nature, a spiritual meaning was lost" (Lehan 134), the reader is thus led through a desert landscape which mirrors the interior state of its inhabitants: it is a place governed by aridity, both literal and symbolic, a perpetual draught which still awaits regeneration, a rainfall of water that, nevertheless, does not seem to pour down.

Man ardently craves water in such a barren land dotted only with "dry stone" (line 24). The dearth of roots, which fail to sprout and thus prevent both spiritual and vegetal life from renewing, provokes a decomposition of a world where neither a concrete recovery nor a metaphysical resurrection can be granted since "the dead men lost their bones" (line 116) and are not able to exploit them for their ultimate rebirth. It, therefore, sounds apodictic that those dead individuals are a projection of the living, living dead fatally bound to a larval existence, exiled to the infernal City, reduced to mere boneless, empty men.

The hollowness characterising the very essence of these individuals, who are "neither/Living nor dead" (lines 39-40), broadens to embrace their whole experience, one which "remains held in suspension in the memory to criticise and render barren the world of ordinary emotion" (Ward 80): an experience made of dead passions and desires. These ineffective feelings are remembered with tender regret but also with pain.

The tempestuous and overwhelming lasciviousness that unavoidably corrodes the individuals and their amorous bondage is submerged by a destructive river, which shares the natural element of water as a ruinous and detrimental factor, one which keeps bringing and bearing the enormous harm of humankind, continuously baptised as the origin of existential turpitude. The "Sweet Thames" (line 176) of the third section may epitomise this decay, the

river projecting and witnessing different epochs of human vices, first and foremost lust. Sweating "oil and tar" (line 267), filled with markers of trade, consumption, and deforestation, the personified "dull canal" (line 189) also ferries the indifferent violation and stagnation of sexuality: in its autumnal ambient setting, "the nymphs are departed" (line 175), depriving the contemporary age of mythical, dazzling decency. Indeed, the gone-by splendour is now replaced by "empty bottles, sandwich papers, / silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends" (lines 177-78), all nasty testimonies of the squalid, contaminated spectacle of the urban civilisation.

The river cannot foster any redemption or regeneration, its waters exteriorising the intimate pollution of contemporary men, who are now used to "fishing in the dull canal / On a winter evening round behind the gas-house" (lines 189-90), and to seeking their spiritual catch in an industrially contaminated medium. Instead of promising rebirth, thus water only guarantees a pernicious death, which men timorously ought to be afraid of: "Fear death by water" (line 55), the scary admonishment of a deceitful fortune-teller who has supplanted the Biblical prophecies, forewarns the deluded believers of the dangers that the natural element might dispense. Moreover, the peril is even exacerbated by the revelation of their (un)fortunate card, "the drowned Phoenician Sailor" (line 47), for whom the "current under sea" (line 315) has prepared a sepulchre.

However, if the sea (and, by analogy, water) constitutes the *ναυηγοῦ τάφος*,[4] fire (and, *mutatis mutandis*, land) represents the hopeful possibility of salvation, its desert, rocky environment paradoxically allowing the mystic Eucharist and Biblical purification (Serpieri 63). The messages of a potential catharsis for the corrupted individuals of *The Waste Land* are, in fact, entrusted to Buddha's burning flames and to the peremptory Upanishad Thunder, which, at a forlorn point of desperation and dryness, when the entire nature hungrily "waited for rain" (line 396), propitiously speaks. Accompanied by favourable rainfall, yet its

actualisation occurs in a world "far distant, over Himavant" (line 397), within an ecosystem that is sheltered from urban decadence.

But, while the spiritual moment of dialogue between men and God, between the earth and the Heavens, seems to portend a new beginning, the wastelanders continue to live in a liminal space, sitting "upon the shore / Fishing" (lines 423-24), waiting to be purged of their sins in the purgatorial "*foco*" ["fire" (line 427)] which, nonetheless, has relinquished "the arid plain behind" (line 424) them. The hope for a potential transformation of the subjects, who, "*uti chelidon*" ["as the swallow" (line 428)], might regenerate in the spring of a non-cruel April, nevertheless obliges them to "set (their) lands in order" (line 425), even though their historical macrocosm "is falling down" (line 426): like "*la tour abolie*" ["the tower in ruins" (line 429)], indeed the whole tradition is collapsing, and men can eventually realise that their experience is uniquely "a heap of broken images" (line 22) (Sabbadini 374).

Here is Eliot's *Unreal City*, which outstandingly accommodates the complex of simulacra and contingent truths resulting from the virtual appearances of metropolitan experience (Yang 204), where lust and desire constitute "the inescapable starting point for a mythical cycle of decay" (Potter 139). Contemplating both the devastating effects of the First World War on individual bodies and minds and the deadened landscape they inhabit, *The Waste Land* unfolds the psychological damages of fragile individuals whose insanity often extends to potential physical traumas, exposing the suffering of unconscious victims whose misery cannot be relieved (Badenhausen 147-48). Where, thus, can life be either discovered or, whenever possible, recovered?

The physical and spiritual desertification evoked and reiterated by the poem, from the initial title to the final line, logically infers the inevitable waiting for a redeeming moment of fertilisation, which might eventually allow the evasion from the harmful symptoms of modern malaise. The painful pursuit for a sign of redemption and fecundity which *the Waste*

Land craves, yearning for that "spring rain" (line 4), which cruel April delays conceding, in a ravaged London crawling with human vices and natural putrescence, clearly cannot be solved in the decayed modern world, too entrenched in its heretic and slothful doctrine (Sultan and Shihab 95).

The quest must therefore diverge from the mundane earth towards an alternative realm, an *Unreal* environment where the current state of degeneracy, flaunting selfishness and lust, can be annihilated, where all fragments can reassemble in order to recover the lost integrity, where "you feel free" (line 17) from the torments of the terrene world (Bellour 428).

The ideal resolution "to revive the exhausted wells of Western Christianity and, thereby, Western civilisation" (Spurr 67), is thus assigned to the incantatory "Shantih" (line 433), which solemnly concludes the poem, "The Peace which passeth understanding" (Eliot, "Collected Poems" 76),[5] formal Sanskrit ending to prayer in the Upanishads. In the arduous attempt to reconcile the ineffable gap in the interrelation among fragmented ruins, the threefold formula comes to be the only answer to the paralysed contemporary condition: a benediction, the assertion of and wish for peace, also constitutes *The Waste Land*'s ultimate appeal to wisdom, enacting a transcendental movement from the false spring of illusive world towards the harmony that heralds liberation from rebirth (Kearns 210). "The thing now runs from 'April…' to 'shantih'" (Pound 234), as Pound declared, and the miraculous regeneration of the dead men makes its way through an oncoming purgatorial path, one in which the pilgrims abandon civilization and its history in search of a new life.

In conclusion, by both pointing out the alienating urban experience of modernity and noticing its consequent harmful impact on individual and cosmic well-being, Eliot's *The Waste Land* assumes the configuration of a journey through scenarios that aim at communicating the negative effects of a potential separation from the natural world, and

calls for a renewed environmental responsibility for the benefit of human and non-human life.

The contemporary world, where frantic urban rhythms and loud human noises have supplanted the flourishing voices and colours of the garden—now downgraded to a barren, dry desert –, ends up configuring as the actual projection of a depersonalised humanity, a universe of shattered identities whose life is reduced to an inexorable, repetitive sequence.

The infecundity typifying the modern realm epitomises an objective situation whereby a personal paralysis is mirrored in a broken natural landscape, where the distant glimpse of a providential spring turns out to be the destructive flux of an impetuous river which carries along the shattered hopes of impotent subjects, a powerful stream whose waters can only guarantee a mournful fatality, and whose turpitude reflects the dirty consciousness of hollow people, floating wrecks submerged by the eternal force of lust.

The infernal contemporary den of iniquity, entirely dotted with harsh rocks which, far from proffering a shelter, exemplify the arid souls of faithless and inept men, becomes the valley of tears for desperate penitents who urgently necessitate a religious renewal, in order to be purified and then reconstitute the frail natural framework where they abide.

Indeed, it is only when men have abandoned the corrupted, sordid region of materiality, and have gradually conquered a detached, spiritual state of sanctity, that their effective communication with the surroundings can occur. Therefore, if the sinful, temporal world must be indubitably evaded, then an *a*temporal dimension must be achieved, a mystic zone where what is actual in time and place intersects with eternity, and where people can individuate and enjoy their true, emotional ties with the beauty of the earth.

This transcendental movement—synthesised in Eliot's final work, *Four Quartets*, where the craved reunion between human being and Divinity eventually takes place, and where each element is integrated within the universe—allows the plausibility of a linkage

between nature (i.e. environment) and mysticism, and thus the exhibition of a new and different overview of *The Waste Land* in exquisitely environmental terms.

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From Allusions to Illusions: A Critical Study of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* with Special Reference to the Indelible Influence of Indian Thought on Eliot

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Abstract: The fact that a plethora of allusions drawn from the Indian philosophy found their way into T.S. Eliot's seminal work *The Waste Land* speaks volumes about the indelible imprint the Indian philosophy had had on the critically acclaimed poet. The text is not only peppered with Sanskrit phrases such as "Shanti Shanti" but also sees Eliot alluding to the three cardinal virtues of Damyata (Restraint), Datta (Charity) and Dayadhvam (Compassion). Although many literary critics, including David Naugle, E.L. Mayo, PS Sastri and G. Nageswara Rao, have previously pointed out the Vedic and Buddhist references in the said poem, the exact extent of Eliot's Indian connection continues to elude us to date. The present paper aims to sift through the comments of the critics mentioned above and re-examine the poem by reading it through the lens of Orientalism. The researcher will also probe into the downside of confining the work at hand to the cloistered walls of Indian wisdom alone, thereby reiterating the universal outlook that the poem exhibits even in contemporary times.

Keywords: Wasteland, Buddhism, Universalism, Indian Philosophy, Vedic Thought

Introduction

While famous poet W.B. Yeats gleaned an apocalyptic vision of the turmoil that was to follow in the aftermath of the First World War and let out a resonating lament in his poem The Second Coming, "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;/Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world", Yeats' contemporary modernist poet- T.S. Eliot found solace in the warm cocoon of age-old Hindu wisdom and philosophy. The multitude of allusions drawn from Indian philosophy and

the usage of Sanskrit phrases in one of his most critically acclaimed poems, *The Waste Land*, stand testimony to the fact that Eliot turned towards the philosophical and religious sentiments of the East to escape the imminent catastrophe of spiritual aridity which he foresaw would befall the West. The poem, thus, renders itself fit for an in-depth study of the extent of faith Eliot reposed in the Hindu philosophy and way of life, especially when it came to solving the predicament that the post-war Western countries found themselves in.

The celebrated poem entirely evidently bore conspicuous impressions of Eliot's Indian scholarship, which he received under the guidance of erudite Sanskrit scholar Professor Charles Rockwell Lanman at Harvard University. Another factor which added to the profound influence of Sanskrit on Eliot's poetic compositions is that Eliot's PhD supervisor Josiah Royce, too, got acquainted with Sanskrit owing to Professor Lanman. The deep interest that Eliot developed in the study of Indian scriptures went a notch higher because of his mentors, George Santayana and Irving Babbitt, who, too, left a lasting impact on the poet's mind. In his essay Remembering Eliot, critically acclaimed poet, essayist and novelist Stephen Spender hinted at the degree of interest Eliot developed in Buddhism while writing *The Waste Land* when he noted that, "I once heard him (Eliot) say that at the time of the poem he seriously considered becoming a Buddhist…A Buddhist is as immanent as a Christian in *The Waste Land*" (194).

Such is the extent of allusions to Buddhism, Sanskrit phrases and Hinduism in *The Waste Land* that several renowned literary critics such as David Naugle, E.L. Mayo, PS Sastri and G. Nageswara Rao undertook in-depth studies to point out the Vedic and Buddhist references in the said poem. Another literary critic who merits attention in this regard is writer and critic John Peale Bishop, who called the poem "a Hindu puzzle" because he found the work replete with multiple references to Indian literature (Rainey 33). EL Mayo notes in his work *The Influence of Ancient Hindu Thought on Walt Whitman and T. S. Eliot,* that Eliot was

greatly influenced by Babbitt, whose "system of thought was based upon the study of the Pali manuscripts, the earliest authentic Buddhist document" (173). Interestingly, Eliot himself went on record to admit the profound influence of Indian thought, Hinduism and Buddhism on him in one of his notable works, Christianity and Culture, when he said, "Long ago I studied the ancient Indian languages, and while I was chiefly interested at that time in Philosophy, I read a little poetry too: and I know that my poetry shows the influence of Indian thought and sensibility" (190-191). In another work, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, Eliot acknowledged the deep-rooted influence of Buddhist ideology on himself yet again when he stated, "Some of the early Buddhist scriptures affected me as parts of the *Old Testamen*t do" (91).

Despite previous scholarly studies on the poem, the exact extent of Eliot's Indian connection has continued to elude us to date. Hence, it becomes all the more critical to shift through the critics' comments, as mentioned earlier and re-examine the poem by reading it through Edward Said's *Orientalist* approach. At the same time, however, caution must be exercised by both critics and readers to refrain from confining the work at hand to the cloistered walls of Indian wisdom alone. This is so because the poem's enormous global fame is proof enough that although it is heavily peppered with references to Hinduism and Buddhism exhibits a universal outlook even in contemporary times. The statement above receives credence by perusing the observations of famous literary critic David Naugle, who famously noted that "Eliot presented the credentials of a wide-ranging poetic sensibility by incorporating in his writings not only the 'best' of European culture but also of Indian thought" (1).

In order to present the best of Indian thought, the text sees Eliot borrowing from the ancient wisdom contained in the most revered scriptures amongst Hindus, such as The *Upanishads, The Bhagavad Gita* and *The Sarnath Sermon* by Lord Buddha. Resultantly, the

poem is not only peppered with Sanskrit phrases such as "Shantih Shantih Shantih" but also sees Eliot alluding to the three cardinal virtues of *Damyata* (Restraint), *Datta* (Charity) and *Dayadhvam* (Compassion), which are all drawn from ancient Hindu scriptures. An observation made by literary critic G. Nageswara Rao in his work *The Upanishad* in *the Waste Land* deserves special attention here, in that it examines the very structure of the poem by envisaging parallels between the five cantos and the five elements of earth as per the belief held by Hindus, especially in context to the knowledge contained in *The Upanishads.* Rao notes, "Two out of the five section headings of the poems are borrowed from Indian sources. One may interpret the poem in terms of five elements which constitute life on the earth according to Hinduism" (84). Of these five cantos, the present paper will focus mainly on two sections profoundly rooted in Buddhist and Vedic philosophy: "The Fire Sermon" and "What the Thunder Said." These sections are precisely where the text can be analysed through the lens of Orientalism, as, driven by the pressing need to usher a wave of spiritual restoration in the post-war world, which was otherwise swiftly heading towards moral annihilation, Eliot turned towards the oriental wisdom of Indian thought contained in the ancient Vedic scriptures.

As pointed out previously, Eliot's knowledge of Oriental mysticism stemmed from the erudition he received at Harvard University. Subsequently, he found the application of European mysticism borrowed from Hindu scriptures such as *The Bhagavad Gita, The Upanishads* and Buddhist philosophy as a panacea to cure the West of its moral and spiritual degeneration. Many people also hold the view that Eliot wrote the poem to cope with his crumpling marriage with his wife, Vivienne and turned to Oriental mysticism in order to find a cure for his acute suffering.

The extent of the indelible imprint European traditions had had on Eliot can be deciphered from his comment culled out from his work After Strange Gods, "The only hope of really

penetrating the heart of the mystery into the Indian philosophy would lie in forgetting there to think and feel as an American or a European" (43-44). True to his claim, Eliot did succeed in thinking like an Indian philosopher in the third section of *The Waste Land* titled "The Fire Sermon", wherein he alludes to Adittapariyaya Sutta, a sacred book of Buddhism where Lord Buddha's Fire Sermon directed people to renounce all their materialistic temptations. The insistence on renunciation emphasises the theme of illusion versus reality, alluding to the idea of non-dualism propounded by Hinduism and *The Upanishads*. Kristian Smidt's take on Eliot's Indian perspective, especially concerning his inclination towards Buddhist philosophy as evinced in "The Fire Sermon" section of the poem, merits attention here, "The poet's interest in the Buddha, was of long standing" (91). *The Fire Sermon* thus shows Eliot's inclination towards Hindu asceticism and Buddhist conceptions of Nirvana, as Surekha Dangwal notes in her work Hinduism in T.S. Eliot's Writings that "Desire is the root cause of man's sufferings, and the moment he gets rid of it, he attains perfect 'Nirvana.'. . . [And] the attainment of 'Nirvana,' as preached by the Lord, is the self-denial, which implies the rejection of all senses. Both the references of Gautam Buddha and St. Augustine refer that the wisdom of East and West coexist to show the path of salvation (Nirvana) through asceticism" (33). Dangwal poignantly encapsulated the crux of Eliot's writings in the previous work, where she notes, "Eliot's poetic vision, indeed, is the result of the masterful blending of American Pragmatism, British Imperialism and Oriental Spiritualism" (9).

Correspondingly, "What the Thunder Said" sees Eliot dwelling on the notion of the three DA's (*Damyata, Datta and Dayadhvam*) drawn from Hinduism, particularly from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. The tale is rooted in the mythological narrative of Prajapati sharing his pearls of wisdom with his three disciples/sons to lead a truly fulfilling life. The three cardinal virtues which Prajapati asks his disciples to follow are written in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* from which Eliot drew inspiration. Eliot thus extrapolated the

teachings of the learned Prajapati to his disciples into a sermon meant for the entire modern humanity to guide them on how to lead a meaningful life by earnestly practising charity, restraint and compassion.

In his work, Hindu Law and Custom as to Gifts, Eliot's Professor of Sanskrit at Harvard University, Charles Rockwell Lanman, noted that "The voice of God repeats, the thunder, when it rolls 'Da Da Da' that is *damyata, datta* and *dayadhvam*. Therefore these three must be learned, self-control, giving, compassion" (Grenander and Rao). Thus, according to Lanman, ' The teaching of the Vedas, the Brahman's noblest duty, is a "giving of the Sacred word. The water, once poured out, can never be regathered and taken back. In *the Waste Land,* this idea becomes the awful daring of a moment's surrender/which an age of prudence can never retract" (Grenander and Rao).

Thus, not only does the essence of Indian thought pervade the poem's entire spirit, but it also encompasses the text's structure and how Eliot opens and closes his work. Although the conclusion of the poem with a triple incantation of "Shantih Shantih Shantih" seems pretty innocuously done, the repetition of the Sanskrit phrase holds a special significance. Famous literary critic G. Nageswara Rao decoded it in his work *The Upanishad* in *The Waste Land* when he remarked, "Word Shantih is purposely repeated thrice to indicate the absolute three-dimensional peace resulting from freedom from all disturbance, From within, from above and from around" (Rao 89). Indubitably then, not only does the Sanskrit phrase refer to the practice followed by Brahmin priests of uttering the word towards the conclusion of a Hindu prayer ceremony but also alludes to it metamorphoses the poem to a sort of incantation or prayer in its own right to reverse the excessive spiritual and moral degeneration of the West which has been robbed of its moral compass in the aftermath of the gory World Wars, to the extent that "London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down" with no hope of redemption whatsoever but for a return to Indian scriptures and ancient oriental mysticism.

It is interesting to note, however, that although Eliot borrowed heavily from Indian wisdom, the poem retains qualities of universal appeal since he ensured that the work bears the mark of universal appeal by blending Oriental sensibilities with Western philosophy. Eliot achieved this remarkable feat by extrapolating the oriental metaphysics to problems of modernity in the West. He also borrowed extensively from other sources of knowledge to bring forth the perfect blending of "American Pragmatism coupled with British Imperialism and Oriental Spiritualism (read Indian thought)" without letting one overshadow the other, which in turn grants the poem its universal appeal. Much in consonance with the view stated in the preceding sentence, poet and literary critic Conrad Aiken cautioned scholars and literary critics against their overwhelming attempts to enclose the poem within the cloistered walls of Indian wisdom by remarking that the mere fact that Eliot incorporated Indian phraseology in his work does not take away the poem's universal outlook. Aiken substantiates the said claim by highlighting that the intent of Eliot behind quoting from Indian thought was not to restrict it within the meaning of ancient Eastern traditions but to draw a connection with Upanishads and other scriptures, amongst other sources of knowledge.

Aiken thus questioned rhetorically, "Why, again, Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata? Or Shantith? Do they not say a good deal less than 'Give'; Sympathise, Control or Peace'? Of course, Mr Eliot replies that he wants them not merely to mean those particular things, but also to mean them in a particular way, that is, to be remembered in connection with an *Upanishad"* (193). Thus, even the poem's concluding lines are replete with references to the Vedic philosophy, which holds the view that the ultimate goal of life is the attainment of salvation. Hence, when the poet chants the Sanskrit word "Shantih, Shantih, Shantih," it reverberates with Hindu mythology and re-emphasises Eliot's view that while the Western world is inching closer towards spiritual and moral degeneration, understanding the Eastern traditions and Hindu religion is one of the ways to attain ultimate salvation and world peace.

To conclude, the present study's findings indicate that Indian thought undeniably left an indelible imprint on Eliot's mind. It is essential to acknowledge the fact, however, that echoes of the Hindu philosophy found in *The Waste Land* do not in any way snatch its universal resonance. The excessive borrowing from Hindu scriptures and Vedic philosophy became an effective mechanism for Eliot to stultify the problems the modern Western world faced without compromising the global outlook the poem exhibits. It is owing to the timeless, universal appeal that the poem has that even a hundred years after its publication, it continues to be labelled as a watershed in English literature and a path-breaking work which merits in-depth scholarly study even in contemporary times.

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Connecting the 'Unreal':77 Reading Eliot's *The Waste Land* with Rabindranath Tagore's *Nationalism*

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Abstract: Despite all our laborious attempts to explain and analyse art, we often remain aware of a mysterious inexplicability residing at the core of artistic creation, which eludes all our critical tools of extraction and excavation. Furthermore, this indecipherable alchemy unites great artists across time and space. It weaves through all art connecting threads that mix and merge to create unexpectedly wonderful patterns that transcend the differences between various artistic works. This is why Kurosawa's *Dreams* (1990) merges with Van Gough's paintings or Ray's *Charulata* harmonises with Edouard Manet's *Sur la plage* (Guha 230-232). Such intercultural fusions cannot be dismissed as influence or plagiarism but must be acknowledged as one of those rarities that emerge from the magical matrix of art itself. Such alchemy can also be seen from a comparative analysis of Tagore's *Nationalism* and T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

Keywords: Art, Poetry, *Nationalism*, Beauty, Matrix

Apparently, such an attempt may seem rather audacious, if not downright absurd. Unlike Yeats, Eliot was never an avowed admirer of Tagore. They had drastically different personalities, and their approaches towards art were almost diametrically opposed, especially during the early half of Eliot's career, when *The Waste Land* was written. Tagore even rejected the whole trend of modern poetry and criticised some of its foremost practitioners, like Pound, Eliot and Amy Lowell, in his essay "Adhunik Kabya" (Tagore 497-507). Believing as ever in the Keatsian ideal of "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" (Tagore 440), Tagore dismissed modernist poetry as the product of a universal scepticism ("bishwanindukota") which is mistakenly held

as fidelity to truth (Tagore 503). He even translated Eliot's "Preludes" to illustrate his arguments. Naturally, it is rather difficult to admit that such diametrically different artists could share similar ideas, opinions and even words or images, especially in texts as generically different as *Nationalism* and *The Waste Land*. Nevertheless, in the realm of art, the impossible is nothing.

The point of contact between the two texts is established through their similar thematic concerns. Although Eliot had once described his modernist epic as simply "a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life" (V: 1), it remains immortal for its insightful revelation of what Eliot perceived to be the innate disease of the times which had brought contemporary European civilisation to the twilight state of crumbling decay: "the city over the mountains/Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air" (426). According to Stephen Spender, "The central theme of *The Waste Land* is the breakdown of civilisation and the conditioning of those who live within it so that every situation becomes a symptom of the collapse of values" (Spender 106). In *Nationalism*, Tagore, too, speaks of a similar collapse of values as he prophesies the imminent doom of western civilisation intoxicated with the cult of national self-worship. Written during the horrors of the First World War, Tagore issues a warning to Western civilisation through his text and states:

> Suddenly, all its mechanisms going mad, the dance of the Furies has begun, shattering its own limbs, scattering them into the dust. It is the fifth act of the tragedy of the unreal (Nationalism 49; emphasis mine).

As we read these lines, we stunningly recall the fifth section of *The Waste Land*, where Eliot echoes similar sentiments with similar words:

> Falling towers
>
> Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria
>
> Vienna London

Unreal. (374-77)

Did Eliot ever read Tagore's text? Did he, like Romain Rolland, feel thrilled with those lectures? Perhaps he had not read them at all! Nevertheless, both stand united in the sameness of their vision, unravelling some ethereal communication that ever exists between artists of the highest rank, of which lesser mortals like us can only catch occasional glimpses.

The unreal world, heading for doom, highlighted by both Tagore and Eliot, is essentially a world deprived of spiritual values owing to its excessive obsession with the material aspects of life. This is evident from the opening lines of the section entitled "The Game of Chess" in '*The Waste Land*':

The chair she sat in, like a burnished throne
Glowed on the marble, where the glass
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vine
From which a golden cupidon peeped out
(Another hid his eyes behind a wing)
Doubled the flames of the seven-branched candelabra
Reflecting light upon the table as
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,
From satin cases, poured in rich profusion. (77-85)

This is precisely what Tagore defines as the "multiplication of materials" devoid of "spiritual fulfilment" (Nationalism 67), which Eliot would perhaps identify as the piling of "withered stumps of time" (104). According to Tagore, such fulfilment remains perennially unavailable to citizens of modern nations as the essential elements of the nation is its gross mechanicality. This is why Tagore compares the nation to a "hydraulic press" (Nationalism 21) and states, "A nation, in the sense of the political and economic union of a people, is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organised for a mechanical purpose" (Nationalism 13). This

mechanism of the nation, Tagore feels, is driven by "instincts of self-aggrandisement" (Nationalism 32) which inevitably rupture what Tagore calls "the living bonds of society" (Nationalism 33). Therefore, he asks-"You, the people of the West who have manufactured this abnormality, can you imagine the desolating despair of this haunted world of suffering men possessed by the ghastly abstraction of the organising man?" (Nationalism 33) The answer can be found in Eliot's vision of the "Unreal city" (60), where Tagore's notion of "ghastly abstraction" finds embodiment in the walking crowd of 'hollow men, a procession of the living dead:

> A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many
> I had not thought death had undone so many…
> Flowed up the hill and down King William Street
> To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
> With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine. (61-68)

This vision of a clock-bound, hollow humanity corresponds to Tagore's idea of the modern citizen as a "human automaton" (Nationalism 17), driven by an interminable "greed of wealth and power" (Nationalism 16). As a result, "the political and commercial man" triumphs over "the moral man, the complete man" (Nationalism 20), which also leads to a distortion of the normal relationship between men and women—"…the natural thread is snapping which holds them together in harmony..." (Nationalism 14). The same disharmony also plagues Eliot's characters:

> My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
> Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak.
> What are you thinking of? What thinking? What? (111-113)

The fragmentary, staccato lines reveal the "dissolution of personal humanity" (Nationalism 13), which Tagore had harped on. Therefore, after the abrasive encounter with the carbuncular clerk, the typist-woman reacts with perfect robotic nonchalance:

> She smoothes her hair with automatic hand
>
> And puts a record on the gramophone. (255-56)

The mechanical movements of the woman are the product of that mechanical framework of modern nations, which Tagore equates with that of a tentacular mechanical monstrosity. The driving force of this machinery is the ceaseless quest for wealth and power devoid of all moral concerns. He describes nationalism as "the apotheosis of selfishness" (Nationalism 48), which is "carnivorous and cannibalistic in its tendencies; it feeds upon the resources of other peoples and tries to swallow their whole future" (Nationalism 62-63). Time and again, Tagore stresses this destructive spirit of "fearful and hopeless voracity" (Nationalism 63), which overwhelmed European imperial powers and defines Europe as "a glutton, who has not the heart to give up his intemperance in eating… (Nationalism 87). In fact, he envisioned the entire World War I as a struggle between "predatory creatures" who are "fighting among themselves for the extension of their victims and their reserve forests" (Nationalism 26). Such conflicts, Tagore believed, would inexorably lead to what he called the "ultimate crash of death" (Nationalism 27). Moreover, he warned the Japanese and stated: "My brothers, when the red light of conflagration sends up its crackles of laughter to the stars, keep your faith upon those stars and not upon the fire of destruction" (Nationalism 94). Did Eliot not share the same apprehensions when he wrote: "Burning burning burning burning" in *The Waste Land*? (308)

Of course, the traditionalists of the world would argue that the flames of "The Fire Sermon" only refer to the sterile burning of lust and have nothing to do with the conflagration Tagore talks about. They fail to realise that the various manifestations of lust in "The Fire Sermon" only emphasise one aspect of the petrifaction of moral vitality, the other aspects of

which reveal themselves through colonial exploitation and imperial wars which, according to Tagore, have set Europe on the path of doom. The prostituting promiscuity of Mrs Porter and her daughter (197-201) and the barbaric brutalities of imperial armies represent two aspects of the same immoral appetite, driven on by a collective worldliness. Furthermore, such worldliness or materialism is the apparent result of a loss of faith in fruitful spiritual values brought about by the displacement of the true god. In a later poem, Eliot would himself expresses these opinions more directly when in 'Marina' he refers to:

> Those who sharpen the tooth of dog, meaning
> Death
> Those who glitter with the glory of the hummingbird, meaning
> Death
> Those who sit in the sty of contentment, meaning
> Death
> Those who suffer the ecstasy of the animals, meaning
> Death (6-13)

Instead of attending to this spiritual malady, the West busied itself with "the cult of the self-worship of the Nations," as a result of which "the individual worships with all sacrifices a god much inferior to himself" (Nationalism 46). It is to chastise this misled humanity that Eliot's narrator echoes Ezekiel's exhortations to the unbelieving Israelites and states:

> Son of Man,
> You cannot say or guess, for you know only
> A heap of broken images where the sun beats
> And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief (20-23)

The subsequent references to images of "empty cisterns and exhausted wells" (384) further emphasise this notion of worshipping false gods, generating the movement towards impending

doom for western civilisation. Hence the narrator's cry: "London Bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down" (426). In the context of the poem, this innocent line from a nursery rhyme attains the force of a prophecy that is true for the whole of European civilisation. It is in anticipation of such a fall that Tagore said:

> …earthquakes are being hatched to restore the balance of the moral world, and one day the gaping gulf of spiritual vacuity will draw into its bottom the store of things that have their eternal love for the dust. (Nationalism 41)

A similar end was anticipated by Eliot as well for the hollow men and women of the temporal cities of the West through the concluding vision of *Gerontion*, which Eliot initially conceived as a prelude to *The Waste Land*:

> De Balihache, Fresca, Mrs. Cammel, whirled
> Beyond the circuit of the shuddering Bear
> In fractured atoms. Gull against the wind, in the windy straits
> Of Belle Isle, or running on the Horn,
> White feathers in the snow, the Gulf claims…(67-71)

Such lines project a cataclysmic vision of destruction akin to the splitting of atoms or the death of gulls in storms, which the speaker perceives as the destined end for faithless cosmopolitans. It is indeed possible to read such poetic caveats as prophesied outcomes of Europe's megalomania and greed which defy and violate those fundamental moral and spiritual premises of life, which Tagore had also emphasised. He warns, "But ruins of skyscrapers of power and broken machinery of greed, even God's rain is powerless to raise up again…" (Nationalism 64-65). The same fears of a barren future shorn of all hopes of spiritual regeneration are transmuted into poetry by Eliot when he states:

> Here is no water but only rock
> Rock and no water and sandy road

The road winding above the mountains

Which are mountains of rock without water…

There is not even silence in the mountains

But dry, sterile thunder without rain. (331-42)

It seems as if the same thoughts were stirring the minds of the two authors who, following different routes, came to meet at the same crossroads—a meeting which transcends the scholarly excavations of source-hunters and unites two artists through the rare alchemy of art. And because of this alchemy, Eliot concludes with the *Upanishadi*c parable of thunder and hopes for the "damp gust/Bringing rain " (493-94)." Tagore, too, hopes for a solution through "trust in God and the truth of the human soul" (Nationalism 51), symbolised by the "showers of grace" (Nationalism 64). He firmly believed that Europe could only save herself by turning to the essentials of eastern philosophies, such as that of *the Upanishads:*

> …when the morning comes for cleansing the blood-stained steps of the Nations along the highroad of humanity, we shall be called upon to bring our vessel of sacred water—the water of worship—to sweeten the history of man into purity and, with its sprinkling make the trampled dust of the centuries blessed with fruitfulness. (Nationalism 51)

Eliot also agreed and therefore turned to the message of self-control, charity and compassion ('Datta', 'Dayadhvam', 'Damyata') found in the *Parable of the Thunder* in *Brihadaranyaka Upanaishada* (400-22) as the basis of any possible path to salvation for a Europe devoid of the sustaining light of faith. Tagore himself had ruefully observed that. To a Western observer, our civilisation appears as all metaphysics, and a deaf man playing the piano appears to be mere movements of fingers and no music. He cannot think that we have found some profound basis of reality upon which we have built our institutions. (Nationalism 65) Unlike such observers, Eliot had perhaps sensed such a "deep basis of reality" in the Indian philosophies

which he became acquainted with. That is why *The Waste Land* ends on a note that decidedly looks East, just as Tagore had predicted it must: "Shantih, Shantih, Shantih" (433).

Incidentally, Eliot found his 'still centre' by articulating a worldview strongly and overtly grounded in religious faith, as evident from the *Four Quartets,* where he continued to refer to Krishna and aspects of Indian philosophy. Tagore, too, in an anthology like *Punashcha,* would re-explore the significance of Christ through either a poem like 'Shishuteertha' or 'Teerthojatri', which was a translation of Eliot's own 'Journey of the Magi'. In this aspect, at least two poetic stalwarts of their time converged towards a shared horizon of belief and experience despite their various apparent differences. In reading Tagore's *Nationalism* and Eliot's *The Waste Land* together, we can sense a deeper understanding of such subterranean linkages and are reminded again of the relevance of Forster's famous phrase for our academic and pedagogical practices— 'only connect' (Forster 198).

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Impact of *The Waste Land* on Odia Literature: Revisiting Guruprasad Mohanty's *Kalapurusha*

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Abstract: *Kalapurusha,* a long poem, which is included in the anthology titled *Samudrasnana* (1970), crowned Guruprasad Mohanty (1924-2004), a renowned Odia poet of the 1950s, with Sahitya Akademy Award in 1973. He is regarded as a pioneer of the modernist movement in Odia poetry. A student of English literature, Guruprasad Mohanty, set a new trend in writing Odia poems. He is credited with writing four anthologies of poems titled: *Nutan Kavita* (1955), *Samudrasnana* (1970), *Ascharya Abhisara* (1988) *and Kavita Samagra* (1995). Writing only ten sonnets, he revived sonnet writing in Odia while it was dying.

His *Kalapurusha* was unquestionably influenced by the epoch-making poem of T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*. It is a landmark in Odia poetry. Like Eliot, Mohanty has dealt with the modern themes of alienation and other crises like morbidity faced by modern man. He has interwoven his poem into his time, expressing the feelings of frustration and loneliness of people with deft use of language—no wonder this poem influenced successive generations of poets in Odia. This paper is a humble attempt to compare these two epoch-making poems based on theme and technique.

Keywords: Modern man, alienation, morbidity, myth, irony

Guruprasad Mohanty (1924-2004) is one of the most influential poets of the 1950s of Odisha. His *Kalapurusha* (*Death*), which is included in the anthology titled *Samudrasnana* (*Sea Bath*) (1970), crowned him with the Central Sahitya Akademy Award in 1973. He is regarded as a pioneer of the modernist movement in Odia poetry. He brought about a revolutionary change in the theme and style of writing Odia poetry. He is credited with writing four

anthologies of poems titled: *Nutan Kavita* (*New Poems*) (1955), *Samudrasnana* (*Sea Bath*) (1970), *Ascharya Abhisara* (*Wonderful Meeting of Lovers*) (1988), *Kavita Samagra* (*Collection of Poems*) (1995) His *Kalapurusha* is unquestionably influenced by the epoch-making poem of T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*. It is a landmark in Odia poetry. Mohanty deals with the themes of alienation and other crises like morbidity faced by modern man. He interweaves his poem into his time, expressing the feelings of frustration, loss of spirituality, sterility, degeneration of moral values, boredom and loneliness of modern man with deft use of language.

Some critics say *Kalapurusha* is an imitation of the legendary poem *The Waste Land*; some others say it is a translation of that great poem. However, it is neither an imitation nor a translation of *The Waste Land*; it can better be called a recreation of that poem in the Indian/Odishan context. It is recreated from the ethos of the post-Independent modern Odisha, and the poet attempts to explore and express the predicament of a modern man suddenly grappling with many problems.

Before Independence, all enthusiasm and energy of Indians/Odias were diverted towards one goal of achieving Independence in India. After Independence, that definite goal was no longer present. So, Indians/Oriyas lost their enthusiasm to struggle for an ideal. They wanted political power, and this competition for power pervaded all spheres of life. People wanted power and money by hook or by crook. Corruption crept into all spheres of life. Moral and spiritual degeneration, exploitation, sterility, impotence, loneliness, boredom, frustration and despondency spread in post-Independent India/Odisha. Like Eliot's *Waste Land*, which depicts the disenchantment, disillusionment, moral and spiritual decadence and disgust of post-First World War Europe, Guru Mohanty portrays the corrupt and decadent post-Independent modern Odisha.

Kalapurusha was first published in the magazine *Prajna* in August 1960. After its publication, many critics questioned its originality and denounced it as a blind imitation of *The Waste Land*. They called it the 'Cuttack edition' of *The Waste Land*. This poem created a sensation in the sphere of Odia poetry, deviating from the traditional romantic strain and setting a new trend of realism and modernity in theme, language and style. However, Mohanty acknowledged the influence of *The Waste Land* on his *Kalapurusha* to the editor of the magazine *Prajna* in a letter.

The Waste Land is divided into five sections (*The Burial of the Dead, A Game of Chess, The Fire Sermon, Death by Water* and *What the Thunder Said*). Since 1914 Eliot had been writing it in fragments, and it was finally published in 1922. All five sections comprise 433 lines. Similarly, *Kalapurusha* consists of five sections and 379 lines.

Unlike *The Waste Land*, it is relatively easy to understand. Eliot begins his poem with a description of April, the spring season:

> April is the cruellest month, breeding
> Lilacs out of dead land, mixing
> Memory and desire stirring
> Dull roots with spring rain. (*The Burial of the Dead* 43*)*

These lines subvert the conventional description of spring as a season of joy. Perhaps April is "the cruellest month" for Eliot as it is the season of the crucifixion of Christ. It also introduces the theme of death in life and consciousness of pain and suffering, which are repeated in Eliot's poetry. Mohanty begins *Kalapurusha* with a description of the rainy season. He writes:

> The rainy season is cruel and harsh; it makes Rangani flowers blossom on the heap of cow-dung/By the side of walls, stirring dead roots with new life, pulling roots out of soil./The rain falls, the rain falls, stirring near-dead bald rees/At their roots, the ceaseless rain falls. (72)

However, Mohanty's rainy season is not entirely a season of pain and suffering. It is a harbinger of hope as well. He is optimistic about regeneration: 'There is hope in this rain, there is blessing, health and life without disease, and rest in it./This rain brings hope for paddy fields and mango orchards' (75). Rain brings great relief from the scorching heat of the summer in India. It revives all types of life here.

Eliot extensively uses quotations, allusions, myths, images and symbols from various sources like the Bible, Baudelaire, Shakespeare, Virgil, Dante, Ovid, Homer, Buddhism and the works of literature and cultures of many countries. On the other hand, Guru Mohanty uses myths only from Odia scriptures, particularly *the Mahabharat* and *the Bhagavat*. Eliot inspires him to use myth to express modern man's moral and spiritual degeneration, loneliness, sterility and despondency.

Like Eliot, Mohanty uses myth to draw a parallel between the past and the present. Perhaps Guruprasad takes the title from the '*Musala (Mace) Parva (Canto)*' of *the Mahabharat*, which describes the destruction of the Yadavas with the emergence of 'Kalapurusha', meaning 'Death', who kills all the *Yadavas* in Dwaraka, moving from street to street and the valiant warriors of Dwaraka can neither injure him nor hinder him with their best efforts. He refers to this mythical incident to 'compare and contrast' and to draw a parallel between the cruelty, evil deeds and moral and ethical degeneration of the *Yadava* dynasty of Sri Krishna and the contemporary corrupt and polluted life, sorrow and suffering, the sterile and diseased mentality of the post-Independent modern man, particularly Odias in this poem.

Like the despondent and cursed life portrayed in *the Waste Land*, Mohanty portrays the life of futility, emptiness, sterility, hopelessness and utter despondency of post-Independent modern Odias/Indians/man. In his words:

> There is tiredness of all emptiness and futility like endless stretches of sands of the Kathojodi river Description in newspaper, condolence meeting, brief

biography Evening emerges or sacred rain of the month of *Shraban* emerges from the dusty sky We wait for party and election

The sorrow of polluted soul, corrupt nightmare of life. (86-87)

Again, he describes the despondency and futility of life in the following lines: 'Futile and inexpressible sadness is seen under the cold eye-balls/Futile and inexpressible noise of worms, and insects is heard/Under the tie-court-pants or Gandhi-caps or under silk sarees' (75).

Mohanty depicts how corruption has corroded the great religious institution like Emar Mutt at Puri, which is known for its glorious past of around two hundred years. Its religious glory has faded because of corrupt *mahants* (Head priests) and others associated with it. He is apprehensive whether another great religious institution like Ramakrishna Mission would survive the invasion of corruption: 'How far is Emar matt from Ramakrishna Mission?' (86). Eliot presents modern man as mythological Tiresias, a man and woman. He writes:

I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives…

…I Tiresias old man with wrinkled dugs

Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest . . . (*The Fire Sermon,* 51-52).

Like *Gerontion,* he is an older man who is naturally passionless.

Mohanty presents modern man as neither a male nor a female—he is both. It is the predicament of post-Independent modern man that he/she can never enjoy the pleasures of sexual life. He is incapable of it. He/ She is like Ila, a mythical hermaphrodite who is cursed to lead such a life: "I am born a male, and I bedeck like a female / Silk saree, pant-court, impotence and delivery pain are coupled in me / . . . I am Ila, the only son and daughter of the king' (85).

Like Eliot, Mohanty throws Light on modern man's loneliness and boredom and impotence. The sanctity of family life is corrupted because of infidelity on the part of both men and women. The woman desperately wants to talk to her husband to overcome her

boredom and loneliness: 'Speak, speak I feel very bad, the pictures in the theatres are bad, radio sings bad songs/ Speak, speak, why are you silent/I do not like anything'— Marx, Gandhi, Jagannath Das (77).

He depicts the silent suffering of women exploited because of their poverty in post-Independent India. In ancient India, women were elevated to the place of deities. It was said that where women were revered, gods resided there. Gradually after Independence, women were treated as 'objects' to be bought and sold to be enjoyed. They have no choice but to satisfy the carnal desires of men for their livelihood. Women bear this humiliation and moral degeneration like a dormant cobra lying in the forest: 'I am a cobra lying motionless in the forest,/I bear millions of pains of my limbs, heart and soul (Mohanty 80). Here Mohanty takes the allusion from *The Bhagavat.*

Like Eliot, Mohanty portrays modern men and women who do not follow social, religious and moral values. They are social types and symbols of decadent modern society. Men characters like engineer Smarta Das, businessman Bose babu, and Deputy Collector Ramu and women characters like *Pratima, Minati,* and *Meera* belong to this category.

He uses the myth of King *Parikshita* from *The Mahabharat* to portray modern man's fear of death and his anxiety and horror because of his corrupt and immoral deeds. King *Parikshita* is the grandson of the *Pandavas.* He is the last surviving heir of the *Pandava*s after the great war. One day, King *Parikshita* loses his way in the forest while hunting. The thirsty King asks for water to sage *Samika* who is in deep meditation. When the sage does not respond, he is enraged, puts a dead snake around his neck, and returns. He commits a heinous crime by polluting a pious sage representing *Dharma* (Righteousness) and spiritual faith. When the sage's son returns, on seeing his father, he is furious and curses that the snake *Takshak* will bite the King to death within a week. The King is frightened and spends his days listening to *the Bhagavat Purana* to attain *Moksha* or salvation.

He also depicts the presence of the mythical 'One-legged bull' with his painful cry, which symbolises the arrival of the *Kali Yug*. Here the crippled 'bull' symbolises the depraved state of modern man.

Eliot presents the predicament of the post-War modern man who has lost his faith in these lines:

> Here is no water but only rock
>
> Rock and no water and the sandy road
>
> The road winding above among the mountains
>
> Which are mountains of rock without water.
>
> …But dry sterile thunder without rain (*What the Thunder Said*, 56).

Here 'water' and 'rain' symbolise spiritual grace that modern man cannot receive. In *Gerontion*, the protagonist says the same thing: 'Here I am, an old man in a dry month, / . . . waiting for rain' (23).

Similarly, standing on the stone- bridge at Ranihat on a rainy day, the narrator in *Kalapurusha* feels as if the rain and wind are telling the tale of inexpressible exhaustion and broken-heartedness of modern man: 'Tiredness and utter tiredness of heaps and heaps of broken images of this planet' (82).

Besides, Guru Mohanty narrates modern man's all-pervading gloom and despondency through the images of 'dull sand', 'colourless grass', 'pale earth', 'dull sun-rays' and 'endless thirst and thirst'. The narrator views only:

> A silent wide expanse of sand and sand
>
> Colourless grass and sand and the pathless and pale earth
>
> Dull sun-rays and pathless pale sky above
>
> Colourless sand and grass and endless thirst and thirst
>
> Dull dusty motionless sand and sand and sky (83).

All these images of Mohanty recall Eliot's images of 'only rock', 'the sandy road', 'rock without water', and 'sterile thunder without rain'.

Like Eliot's 'London bridge', Guru Mohanty refers to the 'Ranihant bridge' of Cuttack in *Kalapurusha*. Unlike 'London Bridge', which symbolises an aimless teeming crowd, 'Ranihat bridge' in Cuttack represents neither crowd nor aimlessness of modern life.

Further, Mohanty uses mythical characters *Akrura* and *Udhaba*. The narrator says that he is burdened with the futility and agony of modern life like those two devotees of Sri Krishna, and like them, he wants deliverance from the misery of his materialistic life through a spiritual journey in order to attain salvation. In the words of Mohanty, 'Hey Akrura, hey Uddhaba, my soul-mates/Wait, wait, I carry a burden like you' (73). Following Hindu philosophy and Buddhism, Mohanty believes that a moral and spiritual regeneration is possible for modern man if he can sever all materialistic attachments and adhere to a spiritual way of life. *The Light of Arundhati star*, which symbolises purity and faithfulness, will show the right path to modern man amidst the encircling gloom of life.

Eliot ends *The Waste Land* with words from the *Upanisad*: '*Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata./Shantih shantih shantih'*, which implies 'give, sympathise, control'. Perhaps Eliot wants to convey that the regeneration of the decadent moral and spiritual values of post-War Europe lies in adhering to the Upanishadic teachings of Indian philosophy. Similarly, Mohanty ends his poem by invoking Light:

> If this planet starts its decadent journey from darkness . . .
>
> If this planet starts its decadent journey from death . . .
>
> If this planet starts its decadent journey from falsehood . . .
>
> Lead me from mortality to immortality
>
> From darkness to Light
>
> From illusion to truth.

Om, peace, peace, peace. (87)

Here Guru Mohanty expresses the message of around 60,000 great sages who congregated at Naimishyaranya to invoke Light to dispel the pall of gloom from the face of the earth. It was the juncture of the *Dwapar Yug* and the *Kali Yug* when Sri Krishna was dead, *Dharma* (Righteousness) and *Jnana* (Wisdom) disappeared from the earth, and the earth plunged into the deep darkness of unrighteousness and ignorance. They chanted the *mantra (Incantation)*:

Om asato ma sadgamaya.

Tamaso ma jyotirgamaya.

Mrutyorma amrutam gamaya.

It implies, 'Lead me from illusion to truth/ From darkness to light/ From mortality to immortality.'

In *Kalapurusha*, Guru Mohanty depicts a realistic picture of the materialistic self-indulgence of the morally and spiritually decadent post-colonial India/Odisha. Like Eliot, he depicts the predicament of the modern man who is conscious of his sexual ineffectuality and emptiness of life. As a result, the modern man also suffers from a sense of guilt and failure**.** Other poems of Guruprasad Mohanty, like *Gobara Ganesh*, *Alaka Sanayal*, *Harekrushna Das (1), Harekrushna Das (2), and Akrura Ubacha*, depict the same predicament of modern Odisha. Besides, like Eliot's poem, the 'I' of this poem does not have one identity. It is divided into many personae. Guru Mohanty deviates from the Sanskritised language of his predecessors and uses commoner language with wit, irony and metaphor to express his thoughts and ideas. *Kalapurusha* ushered in a new era of modernity in Odia poetry and influenced successive generations of Odia poets like Ramakanta Rath, Sitakanta Mahapatra, Soubhagya Kumar Mishra, and Rajendra Kishore Panda. Jatindra Mohan

Mohanty rightly says that perhaps it would not have been possible to write *Kalapurusha* without *The Waste Land.*

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T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*: A Metaphor for the Contemporary World

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Abstract: The paper looks at T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* as providing a label for the modern world. In literature, as also in common parlance, it has been the most appropriate way to voice the sentiment of the twentieth century, and it seems it will continue to be in the twenty-first century as well. Written in 1922 in the wake of the devastation caused due to the First World War and the Spanish Flu pandemic, the poem portrayed modern civilisations' social, moral, and cultural decay. A hundred years later, as the world continues to be under the shadow of war, technology-caused environmental crises, the Covid-19 pandemic, increasing polarisation due to race, ethnicity, or religion, and a comprehensive breakdown of human values, morality and ethics, Eliot's poem might as well have been written today about the present world. The paper looks at the poem as echoing the central sentiment and issues governing the contemporary world. It examines the validity of ways suggested in the poem to make life meaningful again.

Keywords: Contemporary/Past Waste Lands, Mythical, Multicultural, Violation, Apathy

T.S. Eliot published *The Waste Land* along with his explanatory notes in 1922. Even so, the poem felt like it needed to be more explicit, more precise, and easier to follow. Despite the fact that numerous studies over the years have tried to explain its complexities, the poem has continued to intrigue readers and students of literature. That, however, has not come in the way of the widespread use of the expression 'waste-land' to describe the contemporary modern culture and the human condition. That it is made use of even by those who have not read the poem aptly indicates how Eliot's worldview has embedded itself into the collective unconscious. A hundred years later, the poem's vast range of themes, references, and ideas

continues to engage the interest of poetry lovers and scholars. The anniversary year becomes an occasion to revisit the poem and review Eliot's portrayal of problems and their solutions concerning the present time. The paper explores some of the themes expressed in the poem to assess their relevance in the contemporary global scene.

Eliot wrote the poem while the world was reeling under the devastating effects of the First World War and the Spanish Flu pandemic. The poem attempted to find a sense of order and meaning in the world, a kind of continuity in the march of human civilisation.

It made a fascinating read with its innovative and complex use of myth, legends, multi-vocality, multi-locales, and multiple allusions borrowed from various languages, religions, and cultures. In a way, the poem was a multicultural offering long before the emergence of multi-ethnic voices in English literature. Today, the narrative of global progress notwithstanding, the world has not changed much, and the moral, spiritual, and cultural decay of the past continues to plague human civilisation. To take a broad view of the past, since the writing of the poem, the world witnessed another large-scale dance of destruction during the Second World War. Consequent to the atomic bombing at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there began, with greater vigour, a questioning of everything that was held sacred in the past. There has also been a rise and fall of robust regimes and political systems, even as the struggle for democracy, rights, equality, and justice has remained perpetual, ever watchful. There was a break with colonialism, and the colonised started 'writing back' to stake a claim to the global consciousness. The progress in the field of technology, it was believed, would bring the world closer in terms of physical distance. Psychologically, however, it has led to a breakdown of community and social relations, causing individuals to be increasingly isolated and lonely.

Additionally, polarisation in terms of ethnicity, religion, class, etc., has further divided humanity. On top of it all, environmental degradation has emerged as a severe threat to our civilisation. More visibly, the Covid pandemic is not yet over, and the shadow of war looms

ominously over the world. Under such circumstances, it is no wonder that the central premise of *The Waste Land*, namely, how to regain faith in the reign of "Shantih," continues to be a relevant and valid yearning.

As an outsider, an American in England, Eliot perhaps understood the significance of incorporating the cultural experience of the colonies into English literature instinctively. His extensive reading helped him project a universal, globalised vision to use the term without its negative connotations of the centre ignoring the margins. At the same time, this must be noted that the poem was not about giving a right due to the cultural wisdom possessed by different races long suppressed and exploited under colonisation. Instead, Eliot's vision focused on finding meaning from the idea of an idealised cultural past and infusing the present with its vigour of positivity and optimism. His faith in the potential of literature to act as an agent of moral meaning and restitution is what has kept the poem relevant across time and generations. The poem creates a context which facilitates reading across cultures. While it is true that the texts from different sources are interpreted in relation to the English reality, their presence in the poem successfully reflects a sense of common, collective desire for meaning to existence, both as an individual and as a community. The poem indicates the consequences of forsaking humane values in the name of development and progress or for personal selfish motives, another element that ensures its status as a 'timeless' work of literature.

In his celebrated essay, "Tradition and Individual Talent," Eliot states that tradition. "involves, in the first place, the historical sense . . . [which] involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that ... the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timelessness as well as of the temporal and the timeless and the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional" (38).

The poem may be seen as a superb application of the above statement. The return to the past in the poem, thus, is not an exercise in nostalgia. Rather, the aim is to explore how to recover meaning embodied in literature, history, and mythology and apply it to refresh contemporary reality. Eliot's use of myth, legends, and literary allusions suggests the continued presence of the past experience in the making of present identity and culture. The multiple shifting voices in the poem demonstrate how reality cannot be comprehended with any single viewpoint alone and/or by ignoring multiplicity contributed to by many other, even contrary, ideas. While the trend of looking towards a historical and believed to be glorious past is shared among numerous ethnic communities seeking to assert identity, Eliot, in the poem, keeps the narrative open-ended, multicultural, and fluid, with each reference adding to the central sentiment of the poem. With the epitaph referring to Sibyl, Eliot sets the poem's mood to that of a bundle of riddles for the readers to unravel. The Sibyls in Greek mythology were women who possessed great prophetic powers. However, when asked questions, their answers were like riddles, which had to be interpreted by the listeners. As per the myth, the Sibyl of Cumae had her wish for long life granted by Apollo. Nevertheless, since she had forgotten to ask for eternal youth, the blessing became a curse. She continued to grow old but would not die even as she lost her youth and prophetic powers. So, when asked, "what do you want?" she answered, "I want to die." The reference to Sibyl is one to indicate what it means to exist without purpose and, second, to hint at various themes simultaneously. Thus, Eliot creates the first of a series of powerful images in the poem: life suspended between living and dying, caught in a web of its own making due to certain choices made in life. Every image is in a fragmented form, more as in jumbled leaves, which contain Sibyl's answers to questions. This strategy enables Eliot to load multiple meanings, allowing readers to find echoes in various other sources they might know of and interpret whichever way they want to.

Thus, Eliot presents a collage of myths gathered from multiple sources in the poem. He employs what he called the mythical method, a term he coined in his review of James Joyce's novel, *Ulysses.* Eliot describes this method as a "way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history," and that in "using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr Joyce is pursuing a method which others can pursue after him" (483). In *The Waste Land*, Eliot is doing precisely that; looking towards the past to understand the knowledge that has disappeared in the present. Through the mythical method, it becomes possible to reveal which, at times, is satirical by showing how much the present has degenerated; comparative to highlight the essential similarities with the days gone by; historically neutral, indicating the possibility of a revival in the future; confused in its fusion of the realistic and the fantastic; ordering in its approach to ideas related to morality, ethics, and passion. The mythical method does not offer an escape to a better past but an entry into a confusing present. The use of myths ensures that a reader actively participates in the poem working out its multiple meanings to make sense of one's reality. It is almost as if one is on a quest for oneself. Since myths are an eternal part of human consciousness, reference to so many of them taken from various cultures ensures an overflowing of the essence of the collective experience. It demonstrates the ever-lasting appeal of the poem. After all, every generation looks towards these cultural vignettes of knowledge and wisdom to make sense of contemporary problems and mysteries.

The motif of *The Waste Land* gives the framework to the narrative as Eliot explores ways of surviving the emotional and spiritual sterility of contemporary reality. The ancient myths of the fertility of land linked to a god/king with its parallels in India, Egypt, and Greece, as well as the Christian myth of death and resurrection of Christ, facilitate the articulation of collective and individual yearnings for spiritual base and fulfilment. In the legend, the

kingdom turned into a *Waste Land* due to a curse on the Fisher King. As a result, the crops did not grow, and the animals could not reproduce. The curse could be removed only when a knight undertook a quest for the Grail and asked for the meanings of certain symbols displayed in the castle. Eliot combines the myths of the Holy Grail and the Fisher King, whereby as a solution, God must die so that he can be born again and make the land and the people fertile. Christ did this on resurrection and how he saved his followers from spiritual death. Eliot believes that by reconnecting with cultural wisdom, contemporary civilisation may heal and rejuvenate itself. Cleanth Brooks, in his analysis of the poem, rightly observes that "life devoid of meaning is death…" (60). The fact that people have lost the knowledge of good and evil keeps them from being alive, which becomes the justification for viewing the modern *Waste Land* as a realm in which people do not even exist. The most significant fault, then, is to do nothing, to remain in a state of disinterest, ennui, indifference, and apathy. Apathy, which Giles Mitchell aptly describes "as a retreat into the self, the barren land of the uncommitted life in a flight from humanness and death" (Mitchell 27), has sadly become a common characteristic of modern life. Though Eliot draws extensively from his faith in Christianity, he does not claim his religion alone as having all the answers. That is also why the poem continues to appeal across cultures since the statement of problems and their solutions are realistic and entirely relatable.

The multiple references and characters recreate the despair and disillusionment and convey the yearning to escape it. To briefly examine a few of Eliot's images of *the Waste Land,* April is the cruellest month since it forces a stirring, a becoming conscious of the world coming to life around. Winter, on the other hand, is preferred since it keeps one warm and forgetful. Marie, a symbol of the rootless wasteland society, spends her time reading or going on a trip to fashionable spots. In the *Waste Land*, there is no faith in the "Son of God," through whom God might speak. There are only rocks or stone idols, more like "A heap of broken

images." Hence, the Son of God cannot be the saviour since the people no longer believe in God. As a result, they constantly exist under the shadow of death, afraid of being reduced to a handful of dust, mere mortals without any sense of their spiritual selves. They no longer live or love with passion and faith, instead remaining locked in futile relationships.

As Eliot narrates, Hyacinths, earlier a symbol of love and fertility, are now found 'neither Living nor dead,' like Tristan. From Wagner's opera *Tristan and Isolde*, Tristan lies sick with an open wound waiting for his beloved Isolde to arrive. However, as he gets up, when at last she arrives, his wound bursts open, leaving him in a torrent of blood, thus reminding him that love can no longer exist in *the Waste Land.* The spiritually wise women, the Sibyls of the past, have degenerated into Madame Sosostris, a fortune-teller from Aldous Huxley's novel *Crome Yellow* (1921). Madame Sosostris, "known to be the wisest woman in Europe," is a vulgar fortune-teller with a pack of "wicked" cards. She remains busy in the occult practice and does not possess any spirituality. The figures on her cards are those of death, but according to her, death is final, with no scope of rebirth and resurrection. So she warns the man who has come to consult her against death by water. She has no wisdom to see that this kind of death might lead to a new life. The ideas of renewal and transformation, an essential part of the fertility myth, have disappeared from *the Waste Land.* Again, the modern city, London or any other, is the 'Unreal City,' a city of broken images, where a crowd of people flows over London Bridge. The image is drawn from Dante's *Inferno.* However, as Eliot portrays, every person in the crowd of daily commuters is essentially lonely, isolated and locked within, with eyes "fixed...before his feet," scared of making any connection with others. Eliot thus recreates images of sordid and dreary life in the metropolitan cities. Unlike in the past, when people wanted gods to be reborn to save them, in the modern age, they exist reconciled to the way their lives are and quite indifferent to any suggestion of hope and meaning. Hence Stetson, another character in the poem, does not want the "corpse to sprout"

but rather wants to ensure that the dead remains buried and forgotten. Thus, *the Waste Land* is totally cut off from the natural and spiritual worlds. As Eliot addresses the reader as "...my likeness, my brother," he establishes the reader's connection with the inhabitants of *the Waste Land*, thus painting everyone as equally responsible for the contemporary decay. As the author's voice gives way to readers', it enhances the scope of the poem even as it adds to the confusion and chaos.

In "A Game of Chess," Eliot refers to the myth of Philomel, who, after her rape by her sister's husband, was transformed into a nightingale with a haunting song. Her rape was such a horrendous crime that the land had turned arid. In the parallel myth of the Fisher King, according to a version, the land had turned sterile after some maidens frequenting the shrine were raped. Thus, the violation of women in mythology is a symbol of the breakdown of spiritual, moral, and religious codes, a terrible fate for the victims and the perpetrators of the sin. In the modern *Waste Land*, however, as Eliot portrays through the two women characters, the Lady of the rocks and the Lady of situations, there is the rule of lust, and people are involved in meaningless, unsatisfying relationships. The nightingale's song has the power to fill the desert with its "inviolable voice," which gets reduced to the meaningless "jug jug" in the modern *Waste Land* revealing spiritual and emotional emptiness. In the next section, Eliot also continues to paint *the Waste Land*'s horror, boredom, and desolation.

"The Fire Sermon" opens in the autumn or winter when the River Thames flows but does not seem to symbolise sacredness and security. Its tent is broken, and its past beauty has disappeared. Its waters are polluted; "The river sweats/Oil and tar/The barges drift/With the turning tide..." Hence it is no longer an inviting haunt for lovers. All the "nymphs are departed," now there are only the society girls who "wash their feet in soda water." The poet sits weeping by the "waters of Leman," an obvious parody of the psalm about the exiled Hebrews in Babylon; "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down yea, we wept, when we

remembered Zione." (Psalms CXXXVII: I). In the modern *Waste Land*, however, Leman, or "mistress," suggests lust rather than pure love. The sexual encounters in *the Waste Land* constitute a mere mechanical, physical activity, the "rattle of the bones" and the grotesque "chuckle spread from ear to ear." The image of the human engine, which "waits/Like a taxi throbbing..." conveys how the body functions without controlling the mind. The lady typist's sexual encounter with a young man having a red sunburnt face, perhaps due to habits of intemperance, is also without passion. While the woman does not feel anything, the young man is not bothered by her lack of response. In *the Waste Land*, thus, the act of love is another kind of living death, as mechanical as putting on a record on the gramophone, merely an unconscious action. Thus, Eliot repeatedly creates images that reflect contemporary existence's disgust and terror.

Eliot continuously establishes parallels between the poem's contemporary and past Waste Lands. All the myths referred to indicate the consequences of violating some moral, religious, or ethical code, the repercussions of which, however, are not only borne by the perpetrators and the victims of the crime but also by the entire society. A terrible crime is against the entire humanity; hence, the entire land feels its burden and punishment. As myths are common to all cultures, it becomes easy to relate to the inherent unfairness and injustice. Its reverberations are felt deeply in one's soul, leaving one aghast and deeply ashamed, almost as if responsible for what was done to the victim. However, surprisingly, Eliot does not end the poem on a dark note. Changing tone, he expresses faith that the world can still recover from the edge. The escape is possible if the people realign themselves to humane values and undergo repentance for the wrongs committed.

For inspiration, Eliot turns to India. He hints at the solution embodied in the state of "Shantih," or peace which passes understanding. But it is a journey for those who wish to undertake, and that too on one's own. Moreover, like Christ, one must be prepared to go

through the ordeals of agony, even descent into hell. Eliot goes to the very beginning of the Aryan culture to indicate that the rain is waiting to fall in *the Waste Land.* There are black clouds over Himavant, a holy mountain in the Himalayas, even as the river Ganga is "sunken." The entire world seems to be waiting for something momentous to happen, "Then spoke the thunder/Da." The creator, Prajapati, has uttered the answer, which the three groups of gods, demons and humans interpret differently by adding other syllables to the original word. Thus three words are formed; *Datta*, *Dayadhvam,* and *Damyata*, meaning 'give, sympathise, control,' respectively. The three directions must be viewed as applicable to the inhabitants of *the Waste Land*. All these collectively indicate the way out of desolation and decay. Human beings must break out of the prisons of isolation, self-centredness, uncontrollable sexual urge, and boredom, using "the key/ Turn in the door once and turn once..." The poem thus ends with hope if so chosen and desired.

To conclude, the poem demonstrates that the past is never dead. It continues to be a presence, forever affecting and shaping the future of mankind. By making the past accessible and relatable, Eliot thus invents the myth of the modern *Waste Land*. Through the fragmented images and references taken from different languages and cultures, Eliot successfully establishes the consequences of a life spent amidst the breakdown of values. Ultimately, it is about the loss; of faith, passion, love, values, and humanness, and Eliot wants the readers to feel its consequent horror, futility, and anarchy. At the same time, he reiterates faith in salvation as long as one is willing to learn and change. Whether through religion, myths, legends, history, or literature, the choice of affecting change is there for anyone willing to launch on their own quest. The myths and symbols are well integrated into the text to convey disparate experiences holding the key to finding solutions. At the same time, like in a riddle, Eliot refuses to provide any final answers and keeps the element of choice alive for the readers. Thus, the poem is much more than a mere metaphor for contemporary times. As a great work

of literature, it shows a mirror to reality while simultaneously keeping the possibility of redemption always viable for mankind. The solution, however, is meant for those brave enough to toil in the world of ideas. Those who seek are sure to find the treasure hidden deep under layers in numerous cultures across generations.

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Traversing *The Waste Land* with T. S. Eliot and Bishnu Dey

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Abstract: This year marks the centenary of the publication of *The Waste Land*, a poem which would almost by itself change the manner in which poetry would henceforth be written, Although Eliot himself described it as "just a piece of rhythmical grumbling" and a "personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life," it encapsulated the crisis in western culture post World War I. *The Waste Land* made use of allusions, quotations, a variety of verse forms, and a collage of poetic fragments, among other techniques, to convey an experience which was quickly recognised as the commentary of the times. These would also become the maker of modernist poetry.

In Bengal, a group of young poets were experimenting with new poetic idioms. *The Waste Land* was an eye-opener for this generation. A brilliant Bishnu Dey, a member of this group, evokes Eliots in his bleak portrayal of urban reality, use of concrete incongruous imagery, allusions to western music and classics, and the use of interior monologue, among others. This paper shall attempt to examine how Dey both uses *The Waste Land* and transmutes it.

Keywords: Bengal Poetry, Modernism, Rhetorics, Comparative Study, *The Waste Land*

For many readers, T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) is synonymous with modernism. Everything about his poetry bespeaks high modernism: its use of myth to make sense of modern experience; its collage-like juxtaposition of different voices, traditions, and discourses; and its focus on form as the carrier of meaning. His critical prose set the aesthetic standards for the *New Criticism* and his journal *Criterion* was one of the primary arbiters of taste throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Eliot's wide-ranging but relatively small corpus of work – "The Love Song of J. Alfred

Prufrock" (1915), the seminal *The Waste Land* (1922), and the later *Four Quartets* (1943), which Eliot considered his masterpiece—has made him the primary figure of modernist poetry both for his peers and for subsequent generations.

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born on September 26, 1888, in St. Louis, Missouri, to a wealthy Unitarian family with roots in Massachusetts. Eliot Studied first at Smith Academy from 1898 to 1905 and then at Harvard College from 1906 to 1909. Eliot learned Greek, Latin, French, and German, developing philological skills and understanding varying philosophical traditions. At Harvard, Eliot became interested in French symbolist poetry, especially in the poetry of Rimbaud, Verlaine, and Laforgue. These poets would prove influential for Ezra Pound as well.

In 1911, Eliot enrolled as a doctoral student at Harvard, deeply immersed in Buddhism and learning Sanskrit. Having studied in Germany and at Oxford, Eliot settled in England after the outbreak of the First World War, working as a teacher and, famously, as a banker. He soon became a leading figure in the London artistic scene along with Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and others became a British subject in 1927 and converted to Anglicanism around the same time.

Eliot's first genuinely mature piece of verse, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," written chiefly when Eliot was only twenty-two, was pioneering in its use of interior monologue, in its fragmented structure, and in its startling figurative language ("Let us go then, you and I, / When the evening is spread out against the sky/Like a patient etherised upon a table"). It amazed Ezra Pound, three years Eliot's senior, by its modernity, which Eliot had achieved without direct contact with avant-garde movements. Pound, who met Eliot during the second month of the war, arranged to have "Prufrock" published in Poetry in June of 1915. With the publication of the volume *Prufrock and Other Observations* by *The Egoist Press* in 1917, Eliot was heralded as the most important of modern poets. He also became the most influential critical voice of the movement, arguing, for example, that, in modern civilisation,

"the poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning" (Selected Essays 289).

In 1922, *The Waste Land* was published, as was James Joyce's *Ulysses*. The 434-line poem helped mark 1922 as a magical year in high modernism. Allusive, musical, and formally and linguistically complex, *The Waste Land* diagnosed the chaos of modernity and provided an example of how art could impose some order on this experience. It expressed a widespread feeling of exhaustion and cultural crisis in the aftermath of the First World War. Like *Ulysses*, it mimicked the different voices of urban life to create a bewildering and complex polyphony. Like Joyce's novel, it used recursive patterning and mythic parallels to provide some semblance of organic harmony. This year marks the 100th year of the publication of *The Waste Land*, and Literature Departments worldwide are celebrating this occasion which had ensured that poetry would become a vigorous, intellectual pursuit deserving of the highest critical engagement on the part of the reader. The dust from *The Waste Land* has blown far and wide and settled on pages of literature in distant lands. Since its publication in 1922, scholars have tried to find meaning and trace its resonances in other literary works. Karl Shapiro commented shortly after its publication that it was made the "sacred cow of modern poetry and the object of more pious literary nonsense than any other modern work save *the cantos* of Pound" (Shapiro 58). Young poets and writers worldwide were suddenly galvanised into poetic creativity by this innovation in poetic idiom and tried to imitate, learn and incorporate this complex poetic style in their creations.

During the early 1930s, a literary movement had begun in Bengal against the influence of Rabindranath Tagore. Just as early as the 20th-century English poetic movement was to denounce the influence of Georgian and Victorian literature, so too the current crop of young writers and poets sought to move out from under the tall shadow of Tagore. The 20th-century

poetic movement revolted against the Romantic literary style, intending to combine poetic and colloquial diction with materialistic, realistic subject matter.

This was the aim of the poets in Bengal in the early 1930s, who heralded the Modern age in Bengali poetry. This movement was a revolt against what they felt was dead form and preparation for renewal. The poets who spearheaded this movement in Modern Bengali poetry were Buddhadeb Bose, Sudhindranath Dutta, Bishnu Dey, Jibanananda Das, and Amiya Chakraborty. The Poetic merit of these poets is reflected in the magazine's pages named "Kallol", which means a "rippling current". It was a journal begun in 1923 by Gokul Chandra Nag and Dinesh Chandra Das to encourage the work of these young poets, many of whom found the inspiration for their new poetic movement from the creator of *The Waste Land*. This paper shall attempt to study the influences of *The Waste Land* on the poetry of Bishnu Dey, a young Bengali Poet beginning his poetic career in the Bengal of the 1930s.

Bishnu Dey was born in 1909 in Kolkata. In those days, Kolkata was the capital of British India, a thriving, bustling, impersonal city not yet ravaged by the partition of India. Bishnu Dey hailed from an urban, prosperous and educated family. Even today, there is a street in central Calcutta in his grandfather's name. He started school at the age of 10 years, in 1919. He studied at Mitra Institution and Sanskrit Collegiate school and was impressed by the views of Rabindranath Tagore on the colonial system of education, and he wanted to leave school. He, however, did manage to become a professor of English.

During his adolescence, he was deeply disturbed by the ongoing contemporary socio-political struggle aimed at freeing the country from the shackles of colonial rule. The ongoing political agitation left an indelible imprint on his mind, and many years later, he would write "Consciousness till Death", a poem in his Collection of Poems, "Tragic Joy of History" (translated by Bulu Mukhopadhyay)

"Waste Land all around, not luxurious Western but empty and primitive

A prey to the dinner of foreign and native through three centuries
Death of Hollow men play musical tones
As I move on, I see perversion and exploitation
Famished, suffocated, thirsty road ends in wilderness saved from forestation.
Many people, men, women and children, eat as if it were a great feast in pebbles and molecular waste
They are served by Death alone.
Look out to find no difference between relative and stranger
As I sit on cactus bush, filling my hands with consciousness till Death."

The above extract shows the influence of Eliot in its desert setting, startling and stark imagery, and consciousness of a world on the brink of annihilation, a Waste Land.

By 1930, Bishnu Dey had already read *The Sacred Wood and other Poems* (1925) by T. S. Eliot. In his early career stages, Dey was deeply influenced by T. S. Eliot's idea of tradition and the historical sense. Bishnu Dey's concept of *traditionalism* meant affirming one's own heritage, and this tradition should include, for example, the Vedas, Rabindranath, and even folk literature. The search for tradition should not be confined to one's language or country. It should extend to include other nations and cultures if there is a connection. His literary horizon included works of literature from England, France, China, Russia and America. It included painting, music, dance and drama. It included *The Upanishads,* Greek mythology, Tagore and fairy tales. It included the symbol of Arjuna, Hamlet, Artemis, and Urvashi. He drew inspiration from Dante and the moderns and even took Chaucer's *Cressida* and Shakespeare's *Ophelia* as objective correlatives. He was convinced that even the contemporary existing traditions of poetry anticipated future development, and a new poem was actually a tradition in its formative stage. Like Eliot, Bishnu Dey moved across realms and pages of antiquity,

finding myths and characters to suit his poetic purpose, e.g. he uses the characters of *Ophelia* and Chaucer's *Cressida* as objective correlatives of faithless love in the modern world.

The educated Urban Middle Class of Bengal, educated in western thought and philosophy, had no trouble understanding the revolutionary thoughts in Science, Philosophy, Psychology, Politics, and Sociology, which had transformed Europe post World War 1. Bishnu Dey translated many of T. S. Eliot's poems since the early *1930s. He began with translating The Journey of the Magi (1932),* followed by *Song of Simeon, Hollow Men, Marina, Coriolan, Burnt Norton, Ash Wednesday,* and *Love Song by J Alfred Prufrock,* during the two decades of the 20th century. He felt that Eliot widened and deepened his vision of literature. Bishnu Dey saw a situational parallel between *The Waste Land* and the socio-economic condition of Bengal at that time. He saw society as an artificial structure, worn out and practically useless. Men were hollow and stuffed. While Eliot saw Europe as spiritually sterile, Bishnu Dey saw Bengal struggling with intellectual stagnation and ennui. The ordinary people were excluded. Cutting from the common people's vital life-giving forces, the towns and cities had turned into dry desserts. Like Eliot, Bishnu Dey not only presents the darkness of a world like an arid desert but also dreams of creating a new world:

"Here is no water but only rock

Rock and no water and the sandy road

The road winding above among the mountains

Which are mountains of rock without water…."

(What the Thunder Said)

We can compare it with

"Curly, sandy piece of land in moonlight

Was bride chamber never made here?

A mirage, I call in distant

horizon…."

(Horse-rider, Bishnu Dey, translated by Bulu Mukhopadhyay)

Sean Lucy writes: Eliot has helped to introduce or to reintroduce in an invigorated form four important poetic modes, a) the method of symbolism, b) the method of myth and c) the method of realism, which works by direct reporting combined with acute sensibility and finally d) the method of parallel and contrast, which works by simultaneous evocation and juxtaposition of moods and situations which are at once like and unlike in order to sharpen effects by ironic comparison." We find most of these features in the poetry of Bishnu Dey.

Bishnu Dey translated many of Eliot's poems since the early 1930s. He followed T. S. Eliot's imagery, sometimes also adapting Christian or Western images to Indian counterparts; he used his images in some translations by using images from Indian epics. Inspired by T. S. Eliot, Bishnu Dey used archaic and traditional images in a uniquely modern context, often creating new imagery with them. The economy in vocabulary, the combination of colloquial verbs with classic nouns, the generous use of satire, and arguments and presentation of disturbing images were some of the influences of T. S. Eliot.

Janmashtami is one of the most important religious festivals of the Hindus, the celebration of the birth of the revered Lord Krishna in Hindu mythology. In the poem *Janmashtami* (1936), Bishnu Dey uses it as an image to convey something different:

"I know, I know, Madam, there were many admirers at your feet

I know I am unlucky

Please sit down, they are not listening now, says the poor one

Maybe I will bloom, too, says this poor one

At the meaningful pressure of your hands, one word from your coloured lips

At one drop of water from the silly cloud

Like a Cactus Grandiflora

None of them are listening, please come again,

And I tell you secretly, a little bit of ok, ok you only smile

(Blush on Roma's face hides the darkness of the tiresome work day)

Alaka, who can be unhappy without you?

(Suresh comes every evening)

You are right, colour of your saree intoxicates me

Large peg.

Have you read Lenin's letter?

Remarkable

Interesting

Tell me, you won't think it a song of madness?

I whisper to you, Alaka,

My dreams of day and night float in the laughter of your eyes

Sleepless

For five years

Like Stalin

Is that Lily's tennis partner Khasru Baig? (Translation by Bulu Mukhopadhyay)

Far from being a poem about Lord Krishna, it describes a spiritual wasteland. The city of Calcutta is the backdrop. Here people go about their business mechanically. Love is a matter of dead habit, and sexual favours are exchanged as a matter of routine. The poem is in the form of an interior monologue; the style is colloquial, and the characters are non-committal. The lines are of unequal length, conveying unease and difficulty in establishing communication. After the World War, people had nothing to depend upon; love, religion,

everything that holds people together, had lost its significance. Allusions are arbitrary and incoherent. as in the use of "Lenin," "Stalin"," Large peg", "Remarkable", "Interesting," "Cactus Grandiflora". As in Eliot's poems, here also we find the character of "Lily":

"She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
Hardly aware of her departed lover:
Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass
'Well now that's done; and I'm glad it's over.
When a lovely woman stoops to folly and
Paces about her room again, alone,
She smooths her hair with an automatic hand,
And puts a record on the gramophone. (The Fire Sermon 69)

The woman here is also bored and lonely, often mentioned as Lily., as Lil in Eliot's poems. Love is meaningless and is almost like a chore to be finished. "Well now that's done, I'm glad it's over. Thus, we notice echoes of *The Waste Land* and Eliot throughout Bishnu Dey's body of work. And just as Eliot ultimately found meaning in the Anglican Church, Bishnu Dey transitioned from modernism to the progressive humanism of Marxist socialism. In his poem the *Horse Rider,* he envisions the impending revolution. In this verse, the horseman functions as the objective correlative of social revolution.

"My heart is overflowing with the light air.
Hey, all-conquering, a burning horseman of a remote realm." (GhorSayar)

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Environmental Apathy and Denial to Change: A Comparative Study of *Oryx and Crake* and *The Waste Land*

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Abstract: A great historian Arnold Toynbee in an exploration of the rise and fall of civilisations, asserted in his book *A Study of History* that "Great civilisations are not murdered. Instead, they take their own lives". The Roman, the Mayan and many other civilisations had a fall because of the abrupt climatic changes, environmental degradation and poor leadership. Apathy towards the environment may bring an end to the human race. Excessive deforestation, water pollution, soil erosion and loss of flora and fauna are the devastating effects of environmental degradation. Inspite of the fact that the entire human race is responsible for the deterioration of the environment, there is a conscious denial to change so that the business can go on as usual. The proposed research paper will compare T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* with Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*. Margaret Atwood, like Eliot, warns the readers about the inevitable apocalypse that the human race will encounter if the environment is recklessly used for the need and greed of human beings. *Oryx and Crake* depict a hyperbolised future of the catastrophic world that lies ahead. The protagonist of the novel is the sole survivor of the plague that infected all human beings. The plague was a side-effect of the excessive use of science and technology, which could not be contained. The novel, like *The Waste Land*, critiques the catastrophic consequences of the mindless interventions of human activities in the domain of nature. Thus, the paper's focal point would be to unravel the similarities between the two texts and discuss them in detail.

Keywords: Environment, Apathy, Catastrophic, Apocalypse, Plague

Civilisations are peculiar. Their origin, growth and longevity are beyond human understanding. However ancient it may be, its traces are found in all the human sapiens living

in their respective culture (Braudel xxxvi). To understand the present-day world and its problems of any kind— cultural, economic, environmental, political, social, scientific, or technical, one has to understand its recent and remote history of events. The brutal and dramatic days of the outbreak of the First World War and the epidemics that the world experienced profoundly impacted the ecology of the present world. Similar events like scientific experiments, deforestation, and technical development that were undertaken for the advanced growth of the societies, interfered with the earth's natural environment and consequently affected lives in countless ways. The present is the outcome of "the whole historical evolution of humanity till now" (Braudel xxxvi). However, all of us take the world around us only in the context of a brief span of our life and watch it as a fast-moving picture where everything happens so fast—battles, deluges, drought, economic upheavals, political crises and so on. In fact, these all are the fruits of past centuries' activities of humans that meddled with nature.

Earlier, this process of transformation was so slow that it could hardly be observed by the naked eye unless compared with the distant past. However, recent results are alarming. The changing lifestyles of people, rapid scientific and technical advancement of the civilisations, and ethical, psychological and spiritual attitude of people has played havoc with their natural surroundings. Under the garb of becoming civilised, which broadly meant the opposite of barbarism, a man got distant from mother nature. Civilisation, for the sociologists A. Tonnies (1922) and Alfred Weber (1935), was "no more than a mass of practical, technical knowledge, a series of dealing with nature" (qtd. in Braudel 5). It is the man who makes civilisation; hence he should ensure that civilisation does not destroy nature or technology human beings.

Human life cannot exist on its own. It is an integral part of the space they inhabit. These social structures confine them and provide them with social security, the ethical and

religious rules they follow, the philosophical beliefs and the civilisation to which they belong. The space, land and its contours, climate, vegetation, animal species, flora and fauna in their surroundings are equally significant and cannot be separated from human lives. Agriculture, stock-breeding, food, shelter, clothing, communication etc., are the primary conditions of human life. The endless drama of human life is played in this setting. Generations keep changing, the storyline may alter due to the activities of that particular generation, but the setting remains the same.

The man is now heading towards a catastrophe where an inevitable apocalypse awaits, and perhaps no one will be left to tell the tale. The disillusionment, frustration and disgust among humans post-world war and post-epidemics have created a sterile world of panic and barren lust for mankind waiting for some signals of redemption. This spiritual emptiness is timeless, vast and limitless in contrast to the grandeur of the past. At the same time, it reminds humans of their moral evils and makes them conscious of their future with nostalgic reminiscences to retrace the past. In such grave circumstances, literature, too, acts as a mode to sensitise its readers towards the environment and nature. It is the need of the hour for the entire human race to realise the harm caused to nature and take needful steps immediately to stop further degradation of the beautiful planet 'Earth'. Various literary texts in literature have been dedicated to studying this relationship of man with nature from an eco-critical point of view.

This paper will deal with two seminal texts, *The Waste Land* (1922) by T. S. Eliot and *Oryx and Crake* (2003) by Margaret Atwood. Both texts deal with the themes of spiritual barrenness and the impending doom of humanity and the human race as well. *The Waste Land*, the most famous literary work of the twentieth century by T. S. Eliot, resonates with the existential anguish and nihilism that envelops the existence of human beings in the post-world war era. The title depicts the symbolic barrenness of spiritualism, moral and ethical values,

life and its purpose, which the man used to boast of. The wars break man's ego of being the supreme power. The reality of its puny existence in the vast cosmos hits humanity hard, and eventually, it becomes difficult for him to come to terms with the extreme loss of life that is the cause of the war. Immense destruction to mankind shattered man's viewpoint of being the superpower.

The anthropocentric concept that all were created in the universe for the benefit of man and that he could exploit it according to his needs is now brought into question. In the words of Timothy Clark, "It is only with human beings that anything else has value" (Clark 2). Further to quote Murray Bookchin, "The very idea of dominating…Nature has its origins in the domination of humans by humans" (Bookchin 34). *The Waste Land* reflects a society that lacks the satisfaction of being the chosen intellectual race to conquer nature itself. While *The Waste Land* resonates with the actual setting of the society, *Oryx and Crake* is a fictional account of a post-apocalyptic era where there is a sole survivor, Snowman, whose memory narrates the tale of doom to the readers. The name Snowman comments on the feeble existence of the sole survivor representing the human race. Along with him are some genetically engineered creatures called Crakers, a fascinating output of the technological advancement of humans. The entire world seems to be neatly compartmentalised into sections which are specialised to research a particular aspect of scientific modifications to overpower the laws of nature.

One such section dealt with the genetic mutation and engineering wherein pigs were modified into 'pigoons', which could be used for organ harvesting. Now the thing that was fiction in *Oryx and Crake* has to turn into reality. Recent research has been conducted and is successful, where synthetic mice are produced in laboratories with the mission of harvesting organs to be transplanted to needy ones. The embryo of this synthetic mouse has developed a functional brain, and the heart has also started beating. This truly is a scientific miracle as they

will have multiple sets of organs to be transplanted. Man's intellect has made him an efficient species to take measures to fight for his survival.

Nevertheless, each development comes at a price; such a scientific attitude has mechanised his life and decreased human sensibilities. The advancement of science and the development of technology undoubtedly has benefitted the human race a lot. However, it has interfered with human relations too, to such an extent that their lives have become too practical and devoid of any fellow feelings or emotions. The families are disintegrating. Under the garb of modernity, people are leading immoral lives.

The protagonist in *Oryx and Crake* has troubled relations with his parents, who are too busy to spend little time with their son. The parents are constantly in a tiff with each other due to their difference in opinion about the scientific developments and the probable aftermaths yet to be explored. The mother's conversation with the child is dominant in her research on diseases in which the child hardly has any interest. Such troubled relationships played havoc with the personality of the child. The mother feels claustrophobic though living in such well-structured 'compounds' to such an extent that she abandons her family and runs away. Revengefully, she destroys her husband's computer in anticipation that the research they were heading towards was far from being a bright future for the human race.

The utilitarian lifestyle of human beings has constantly been curbing the hedonistic desires that are supposed to be the basis of human existence. Thus, the world was becoming difficult for people like Jimmy and his mother, who were woven with the fabric of human sensibilities and emotions. His friend Crake, on the other hand, is the epitome of science and its practicality. As a scientist, he is portrayed as a stoic, living a spartan life of constant endeavours to make man immortal. He worked towards the grafting and regeneration of skin so that people with enough money to endure the procedure would never age. Later, he genetically engineered the Crakers as mutated human children with beautiful eyes, having no

emotional complexity and insulated from all the diseases that were fatal to human beings. Tiresias, the protagonist of *The Waste Land*, too surveys the panorama of modern civilisation and finds it devoid of emotions and moral values.

The concept of sex is mechanical to Crake. He is averse to the complexities of human relationships and thus manufactured Crakers in a way that they were devoid of any binding emotions, and the act of sex was a mere ceremony to reproduce. During the mating phase, the female buttocks would turn blue, indicating the mating call. The female would choose four males among the rest and consummate with them only to bear the progeny. Hormones and pheromones were considered human flaws by Crake. Thus, extreme scientific temperament inevitably made people distant from the essential elements of being human. Similar streaks of sexual degeneration can be seen in *The Waste Land*, as nothing seems to satisfy human beings. No act of pleasure seems enough, as there is a constant hunger for more. Sex being a mechanical act of lust rather than an expression of love, becomes incapable of satiating the soul. All it can achieve is physical satisfaction of the body while the soul keeps yearning for more.

The novel begins with Snowman hiding in his shaft while the Crakers play freely at the beach. The plague has killed all other human beings, and the remaining were those of dead bodies decaying, and the mechanical steel is covered by weeds and creepers. A snowman, though he survived the plague, was not unaffected by its harmful effects, the chief being that his skin became sensitive to the harshness of the sun; thus, he could not bear the scorching heat anymore. He calls it the "punishing sun", "For the children- thick-skinned, resistant to ultraviolet- he's a creature of dimness, of the dusk" (Atwood 6). A similarity with *The Waste Land* is found here as well when the poet mentions the lack of any place of shade to rest, as in the vast stretch of the wasteland, there were no trees that could cast a shadow. The dead

trees, dry stones without any sound of water, and the hot sun all symbolise spiritual desolation. Nothing good can grow in this barren land.

> "A heap of broken wings where the sun beats,
>
> And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief
>
> And the dry stone no sound of water" (Eliot 6)

The Waste Land of spiritual barrenness is depicted in the poem where there are no morals or ethical values, and chaos prevails. In such arid conditions, one desires the shade of a tree of spirituality, which could provide him with the solace of being rooted in a rich culture and religion institutionalised by a defined social setup ordained by virtues. Hence, the malignant effects of human intervention with nature and its course are evident in both texts.

Interestingly, Snowman calls Crakers the children of Crake and addresses the animals as the children of Oryx. He tells Crakers that the children of Oryx do not cause any harm to the Crakers, but they have to fish and hunt in controlled amounts to sustain themselves. Here an ecofeminist reading of the text comes to light as Crakers being man-made, was destructive in nature and animals representing nature had no inherent desire to hurt or meddle with humans. Though in the course of the novel, it is said that Crakers were attacked by bobkittens whom the humans conditioned to be aggressive to control the increasing cat population by using them as potential hunters. The bobkittens got out of control and started killing the human pets and the Crakers. Thus, we realise that every aspect of nature that humans meddled with a backfired manifold.

The moral degradation of human beings is illustrated explicitly in the life experiences of Oryx. She was sold as a child by her family in need of money for the survival of the rest of the family. Her owner used her to blackmail people for sexual harassment. Later she was employed in child pornographic movies. Later in the novel, when Jimmy learns of her childhood, he is enraged and grief-stricken for her. He asks her if she was ever raped and if

all that is shown in pornographic movies happen. She replies that all sex is always real sex. Being an optimist, she tries to see the silver lining that her doom at least lets her family sustain. Crake has a realistic and practical approach towards her pitiable experiences, though Jimmy is deeply saddened.

As children, Jimmy and Crake saw Oryx for the first time in a child pornography movie they used to explore quite often as they were hardly supervised by their elders under the garb of privacy. Modern society gives too much independence to children who need to inculcate the acumen to differentiate the good from the bad. Without providing a moral code and spiritual moulding, immature minds of teenagers are left open to be scarred by whatever comes their way. Such children become easy victims of temptation. The moral fabric of the whole generation is doomed due to a lack of mentoring.

Another essential aspect brought to light in the novel is man's need to communicate effectively. The importance of language is depicted beautifully as Snowman slowly forgets the words he once was well versed with. He forgets the spellings and the word structures which makes him frustrated. A label on the beer bottle seems like an oasis in the intellectual desert. He does converse with the Crakers, but the ideas and thoughts that he has are entirely unrelatable for the Crakers. Subsequently, each conversation leads to further disgust. Crakers ask him many questions, but his inability to answer them effectively leaves him both helpless and hopeless.

Crake created the Crakers, so they did not believe in God and his existence. However, post-apocalypse, Snowman realised that Crake ended up simply replacing God with himself as the Crakers started considering him as the superpower they followed. Nietzsche claimed that "God is dead", but humans always want to create a supernatural being that is looking after them and will always help them grow. It is the spiritual tendency of man to pray to a higher power for their well-being as it brings a sense of security to him. Thus, the atheist quality that

Crake tried to incorporate in the Crakers was a complete failure like many others that he tried to achieve to make the world more straightforward and practical.

This is similar to the satire in *The Waste Land* on Madame Sosostris, a famous fortune teller considered the wisest of all, yet she suffers from a common cold like any other man or woman. The crowds of people that Madame Sosostris sees walking aimlessly in her cards represent the society that has become astray as man has been enveloped with purposelessness, aimlessness, impotence and nihilism. The poem, in some instances, seems to be a blabber, much like the meaningless dialogues of *Waiting for Godot*, where the protagonists are suffering from existential anguish. The second section of the poem, titled *A Game of Chess*, draws a set of isolation and loneliness in people's lives. In order to play a game of chess, two players are required, but the modern man is so lonely that he has no one to play the games with. The female voice in the poem coaxes the listener to stay with her as she is lonely. In continuation, the poem talks about a prolonged conversation in a bar. The conversation goes on without any meaningful outcome with the sole purpose of having company even though the pub owner is eager to call it a day as it is time to close the pub. A similar state of affairs is seen with Snowman in the novel, where he is giving in to depression because of his loneliness. The voice of another man on the radio seeking help acts as a silver lining for Snowman. The predicament of Snowman is similar to the statue of *The Thinker* by Rodin, who, despite having a muscular build and intellect, seems unable to achieve anything and is in anguish over his inability to do so.

Water is a common motif in both texts. Potable water is scarce for the Snowman even though he resides next to the shore. Sea water is abundant, but his inability to consume it makes him feel helpless. Water is symbolic of thoughts and memories. Lack of water is indicative of mental and imaginative stagnation. The dormancy of thoughts and imagination

makes man devoid of the spirit of liveliness and happiness—"Here is no water but only rock/Rock and no water and the sandy road" (Eliot 12).

Water is also symbolic of purification and regeneration, but in the modern man of desolation, it has lost its function and has become a source of destruction. The stock routine employed in both texts is similar to the *Myth of Sisyphus* by Albert Camus, where Sisyphus, despite possessing the powers of a demi-god, was given the task of rolling a boulder up Mount Olympus only to roll it back till the end of time, consequently wasting his capabilities to nothingness.

In *The Waste Land*, the inhabitants of the contemporary wasteland are spiritually dead and dread the very thought of rebirth or spiritual regeneration. *Oryx and Crake* envelop a dreadful threat against the future of technological hyperbolization fuelled by stoic and arid capitalism and the greed of the corporate world scarred by a lack of morals and ethics. The researcher does not deny the immense positive outcome of technological advancements and how they have aided human beings' lives as they play a significant part in the development of civilisation. But as the gyre spirals back after reaching its full girth, the ill effects of technology have also started emerging rapidly. As the great historian Arnold Toynbee says, "Great civilisations are not murdered. Instead, they take their own lives" (Toynbee 4). Thus, the reckless exploitation of nature to feed the dependence on science and technology will eventually lead man to his doom. Texts like *The Waste Land* and *Oryx and Crake* serve as a mirror to their readers of the follies that man has adhered to and the possible outcome that humanity will endure.

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Contemporary Classroom and *The Waste Land*

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Abstract: T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* marked a century of publication in 2022. Moreover, ever since, the way of learning, understanding, teaching and interpreting the poem has been widely diversified. This research paper tells how from 1922 to 2022, the methods of classroom teaching and learning of the powerful poem have gone through several milestones along with the social, cultural, economic and literary background of the era and with the mindsets and psychological approaches of the people. However, the poem has retained more charm and meaning over these decades. The paper primarily focuses on understanding the poem in today's classroom, the challenges and complexities and more.

Keywords: Contemporary, Classroom, *The Waste Land,* Aspects, Understanding, Progress, Modernism

Introduction

The expression of the title, *The Wasteland* has a wide array of meanings, among which one central meaning comes from the theme it deals with. Why waste? The poem by T.S. Eliot is a mouthpiece of world war I and its effects on the entire world – physical, emotional, literary and psychological. From this sense, it would not be disagreeable to define waste in terms of war. It is the war and the bloodshed which have made it a wasteland. Where there has been blood, there cannot be harvest. When the soil is moist with suffering and death, the soil cannot grow fertile for generations, and thus, the land has turned into a wasteland. Where we all reside, this modern land is a wasteland. Numerous allusions in the poem turn our focus towards the many occasions of war, loss and plight of not one but many generations that followed after the first world war.

Since 1922 when the poem was published and came to life, till today, the 21st century, there has been the evolution of a century altogether. There have been numerous advancements in every field. However, *The Waste Land* still stands firm and tall in the literary world. The modernity that started with *The Waste Land* continues to influence and do more literary works worldwide.

Cleanth Brooks commented that the poem itself exhausts its reading and is a sigh for the vanished glory of the past. Reading *The Waste Land* in the classroom for a century is itself an achievement in literature. However, the complexities and challenges have been varying accordingly. The methods of teaching, understanding and interpreting have also been different throughout.

Reading *The Waste Land* Over the Years

Over the years reading *The Waste Land* in the classroom is based on the different experiences and the type of connection it has had over the years. For example, reading the poem in the 1930s must have had the most connectivity with the readers who witnessed the wartime plight. The subjective theme of the poem, along with the background of the world war, would have been only better understood and, instead, more felt among the readers of that time. The methods of teaching the poem in the classroom during those years would consist of various discussions. However, they must have found common ground for the interpretation, like war and ruins, collapse and breakdown, the subjectivity of various religious themes and allusions in the poem etc.

Moreover, during the 1950s and later, when the terms like 'modernity' arose, the classroom teaching and learning of the poem would be based much on the rise of modernity and the period aspects of 'modern', apart from all the war emotions, destruction and plight of mankind towards the innumerable deaths and frightening bloodshed, the discussions must

have gone forward to the seasonal changes and what they brought with them, the metaphor of empty sexuality in the poem and the concepts of birth, rebirth and death.

Coming towards the 1980s, learning *The Waste Land* in the classroom would have caused the rise of specific different ideas than the previous decades. A few of those may be related to romanticism – the idea that existed ages ago in Europe. The poem tells that the idea of romance or love to create life is destroyed, and in the 'modern' era, an idea is just a form of entertainment, as seen in part three: *The Fire Sermon.*

Close to the end of the 20th century, the poem must have caused the idea of nihilism – a theory of the meaninglessness of existence and a denial of the afterlife. Throughout the poem, as Eliot seems hopeless, the concept of nihilism breaks out in an attempt to find another dimension of interpretation. Another concept or idea is the one of desolation, loneliness and metamorphosis. This metamorphosis is from one century to another, and along with that, old beliefs to new, a pattern of transformation — of lifeless days and nights and infertile land. The metamorphosis is from the death of religion to the entrance of a new era of modernity.

Over the years, several ideas must have ruled over the classroom teaching of *The Waste Land* subjectively. These ideas are still prevalent in the current generation. However, many of them were only meant to connect with the readers and acquire their attention in the previous decades—the decades that witnessed the ruins and the decades that followed with similar ideas and news.

The Wasteland in the Classroom Today

Today is a different generation—the one who has accepted various forms of modernity and has started to live with the notion of being 'modern' by all standards. Thus, *The Waste Land* in today's classroom has challenges and interpretations. Below are some of the essential aspects of the subject.

The Conception of Progress

Over these years, the interpretations and styles of teaching and learning the poem have been evolving over time. The idea of progress has created another base for discussion of the poem. The poem has caused the progression of thinking and mindset in the readers. This progression is more about the illusion of mankind to the beginning of a new era, the acceptance of new theories and concepts from wartime plight, from destruction to new constructive ideas. *The Waste Land* in the classroom today consists of this interpretation of progress.

Multi-Cultural and Multi-Ethnic Values

The Waste Land is the best example of the combination of various cultures and ethnic values. The modern era focuses on finding common ground for various races, languages, ethnic groups and cultures. Therefore, studying this poem through diverse cultures and ethnic groups is a thrilling experience these days.

The poem throws light on various cultures like the Indian tradition, western thought, Italian thought, Christian values etc. The poem is a palette of all these cultures and ethnic values that lead to the study of each in depth while reading the poem. Today, the poem has led to more knowledge and emphasis on the various cultures found in the text.

Influence on Other Texts and Art

As stated earlier, *The Waste Land* has the most influence as a modernist poem. Through the poem, artists are influenced to write, paint and imagine the world through the modernist lenses and go on to create art that came to be known as modern art or simply contemporary art style. This style of art includes features like a realistic depiction of human life, a combination of shapes and objects, disturbing images, abstract representation etc.

On the other hand, the influence of other texts has a similar emphasis on modernism. Writings include experimentation and innovation of rebellious ideas, rejection of conservative values, acceptance of new themes and writing styles etc. Artists and writers have come across

realistic notions and freely expressed their ideas in society. All these influences are now seen as a significant part of reading *The Waste Land*.

The Idea of Fragmentation

This idea rules today's classrooms. We have seen various modern texts that deal with the concept of fragmented verse, fragmented style of writing etc. This fragmentation began with modernist poetry, the central piece of which is *The Waste Land*. Fragmented art and writing continue to rule the field of literature in today's world. The background of this fragmented idea is the first world war which is said to have broken mankind and caused disillusionment and loss worldwide. From *The Waste Land*, this concept of fragments developed and evolved to produce many more texts in the same genre.

The Psychological Study of Eliot

The interdisciplinary approach in today's classroom has made studying the psychological aspect of *The Waste Land* quite interesting. What the poet must have been thinking and what the people's psychology would have been when the poem was written is now given more emphasis. The poem's images, tones, voices, metaphors and setting are studied from a psychological point of view. The perspective of *The Waste Land* through a psychological lens dive deep into the mindset and thoughts of Eliot, his ideas, his background, his attempt to see into the depth of the situation and his ability to fetch a balance of the imaginary and reality and the supreme power to pen down all of it in a settling rhythmic form. Eliot's thought processes are closely seen and studied through this approach.

Language

The language of *The Waste Land* is itself a juxtaposition. The density of the language used throughout the poem is higher than the standard poetic language. Along with the ornamental words, the thoughts and multiple cultures assimilated in one place make it tough to read. It is tough to follow all the ancient languages exemplified throughout the poem in the current era.

The Indian consciousness and the western and European language versions have been so beautifully yet tactfully used, making it a complex poem to read and understand for today's learners. The language, sometimes simple and sometimes complex, with multiple ways to interpret and find meanings, leads to the overall difficulty of the poem's language.

Allusions

Allusions form one of the most significant parts of *The Waste Land.* The allusions form the central part. Allusion refers to some past biblical notion or event that has already occurred and is remembered. It can be a reference to an idea, book, or author. *The Waste Land* has numerous allusions to Dante, the Bible, John Webster, Shakespeare, Milton, Ovid, Heese, Spenser and Indian Upanishads. Moreover, there are many historical references as well.

The Complexity and Challenges

While reading the poem in the classroom today, there are many aspects of complexities and challenges. The poem reached a comprehensive set of allusions and multiple themes and languages. The fantastical elements and the actual facts are amalgamated to provide a new vision of possibility. There are five parts of the poem, each telling a different story. Eliot speaks of various things at one go—the dead, the seasons and their connection to human lives, the time etc. There is a repetition of specific sentences throughout the poem—maybe because he wants to attract particular focus to those. The poem consists of various poetic devices, forms and styles. Though the poem is free verse, sometimes there are other poetic styles intact in the poem. There are various images created throughout—effortless and complex, real and imaginary, broken and perfect – it all sounds beautiful to ears but also disturbing. There is a confused and troubled tone. Eliot mentions various places and just the names—we never interpret what he wants us to – Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria, Vienna, London etc.

Some wings do not fly, and some imaginations do not end. There are multiple ways to interpret a few lines and various colours in the imagery. All this only increases the complexity

of understanding and interpreting *The Waste Land* today. Wordplay and sentiments are connected in fiery flames and 'faint moonlight'. The seasonal changes define more than just climatic changes—they tell more profoundly about the change in mankind, the change of emotions and more. The poem is a fine example of multiple interpretative voices from a single person. This varsity of choices has made it a complicated piece of art. The voices speak deeper than ordinary thoughts, flawlessly about flaws and endlessly about darkness and light.

The key to the poem is not easy to comprehend. The concepts vary from person to person. It has immense possibilities for thoughts and action. There are many consequences to the actions rising and falling. The poem captures all the images satisfactorily in a subjective manner.

Philosophies Generated through the Poem

The Waste Land has generated various philosophies over time. It has given rise to many biblical ideas and religious notions, and in contemporary times, the philosophy of cubism, expressionism, symbolism, pessimism, desolation, rebirth and nihilism. These philosophies have a different impact on modern times. Learning the poem through the aspect of these philosophies makes it a meaningful and, at the same time, meaningless piece of art. The poem has everything yet denotes nothingness, dryness and drought. While some philosophies represent a whole system of ideas and thoughts, others only show the futility of existence.

Modernity in the Context of *The Waste Land*

The Waste Land, being the central piece of poetry in the modernistic canon of poetry writing, has evolved the idea of modernity today. We reach a higher level of modernity when we see the symbols juxtaposing each other, the voices trespassing each other, and the images having multiple ways to understand. *The Waste Land* is a beautiful combination of the epic and the lyric—a feature practised by modernist poets. The poem contains the holy and the unholy—another exciting feature and combination of the classic and modern. Eliot points out the end

of the civilization of spirituality and beliefs as well as the beginning of modern civilization, which is empty and futile. He is confused as he does not express any particular emotion at this stage. He's neither happy nor sad. However, a pessimistic tone and a few words of hope remain throughout. Eliot outdoing all the realities and advances of a pessimistic world and introducing the new era of modernity is immensely commendable.

Conclusion

All these aspects covered here have greatly affected the study of *The Waste Land* in the classroom today. *The Waste Land*, a representative piece of modernism, has shown desperate senses of transition and has won over the hearts by fiercely breaking the poignant realities of human actions and their consequences. *The Waste Land* in the contemporary classroom is a perfect example of imperfection shining out beautifully, incorporating all the visions and realities, all the glory and degeneration, decadence and acceptance. It is pretty clear that the poem is a complex and challenging piece of art that justifies the classic and the modern in one go. Disillusionment and faith go hand in hand throughout *The Waste Land*.

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Journeying into the 'Mental Wasteland': A Psychopathological Reading of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*

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Abstract: Hailed as the most important work of the modernist period, *The Waste Land* has been the focus of numerous scholars and critics. When T.S. Eliot wrote *The Waste Land* in 1922, it was a difficult time for the world as well as for Eliot. He wrote this poem after a period of mental fatigue, exhaustion and depression. The crisis that forms the heart of this monumental work was at once universal and private.

This paper argues that even though Eliot strongly opposed the expression of one's personality in artistic expression, *The Waste Land* is an indicator of the psychological processes in the mind of the poet and a result of those psychological processes. In his creative work, Eliot used the experiences of his mental illness and his consequent recovery to write the poem. Eliot used his illness as a source of artistic creativity and inventiveness and it is this abundance of personal energy and insight which made this work so profound and lasting. This paper tries to demonstrate, as Eliot himself believed, the connection between creativity and emotional stress through a psychopathological reading of *The Waste Land.*

Keywords: Eliot, Mental Illness, *The Waste Land*, psychopathology, creativity

> Even the most careful and responsive reader must reread and do hard work before the poem forms itself clearly and unambiguously in his mind… And it is easy to fail in this undertaking.
>
> —Armstrong Richards
>
> Thou this be madness, yet there is method in't.
>
> —Shakespeare

Hailed as the most important work of the modernist period, *The Waste Land* has been the focus of numerous scholars and critics. When T.S. Eliot wrote *The Waste Land* in 1922, it was a difficult time for the world as well as for Eliot. He wrote this poem after a period of mental fatigue, exhaustion and depression. The crisis that forms the heart of this monumental work was at once universal and private.

This paper argues that even though Eliot strongly opposed the expression of one's personality in artistic expression, *The Waste Land* is an indicator of the psychological processes in the mind of the poet and a result of those psychological processes. In his creative work, Eliot used the experiences of his mental illness and his consequent recovery to write the poem. Eliot used his illness as a source of artistic creativity and inventiveness and it is this abundance of personal energy and insight which made this work so profound and lasting. This paper tries to demonstrate, as Eliot himself believed, the connection between creativity and emotional stress through a psychopathological reading of *The Waste Land.*

While the poem has been viewed by most critics and scholars as an expression of modernist values and spirit, this paper investigates the connection between Eliot's psychological state and *The Waste Land*, in other words, "the relation between psychopathology and artistic creativity" (Trosman 709). The poem is full of literary allusions, complex and constant shifts in narrative, making it highly difficult for the reader to comprehend. The poem reflects the unstable mental state of the author in its structure. Eliot's statement goes on to justify this to a large extent: "Various critics have done me the honour to interpret the poem in terms of the contemporary world, and have considered it, indeed, as an important bit of social criticism. To me it was only the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life; it is just a piece of rhythmical grumbling."

It is important to note that Eliot wrote *The Waste Land* while under treatment for mental illness in Lausanne, Switzerland. Eliot had self-diagnosed his psychiatric condition as

he was closely familiar with the symptoms since Vivienne, his first wife, suffered from prolonged psychiatric problems and spent the latter part of her life confined to a mental asylum. There could be several reasons and explanations behind Eliot's unstable state of mind but the primary argument here is that *The Waste Land* was a product of precisely this state of the author. "My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me / Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak. (*The Waste Land*)

Although there is no concrete evidence in Psychology to prove that there is a connection between creativity and psychopathology, such links have been explored by several psychologists and scholars alike. "Research describes how moments of heightened and euphoric mood make people have better access to vocabulary, memory, and other cognitive resources. People experiencing mania can often be more clever and imaginative, often show inflated emotional responses which may facilitate their talent in literature, and often have unusual stamina and remarkable capacity for concentration" (Koutsantoni). Some very prominent writers suffered from some form of psychiatric illness such as Sylvia Plath, Tennessee Williams, Virginia Woolf and Charles Dickens among others. How can one forget the magical and enchanting "Kubla Khan" written under the influence of opium by Coleridge?

This brings us back to Eliot's mental health and the treatment he received for it. Trosman believes that the treatment given to him by his psychiatrist Roger Vittoz was instrumental in churning out a poem that has received a huge amount of praise from all quarters in the last century. Eliot had written some portions of the poem at Margate, where he spent a few weeks trying to get his nerves under control before moving to Lausanne. Margate had certainly not helped his nerves as is evident from the lines, "On Margate Sands/I can connect/Nothing with Nothing/The broken fingernails of dirty hands." (Eliot *The Waste Land*)

> At the time when Eliot was undergoing a psychological decompensation characterised by depression, inability to work, exhaustion, and somatization, he was able to transform his suffering into a work that has been hailed as most representative of the preoccupations of the modern age. We are thus confronted in this instance with a significant link between psychopathology, reintegration, and subsequent creative achievement. (Trosman 709)

Scholars and critics believe that Vittoz's self-created technique of treatment, which he first applied to himself, helped Eliot write such a powerful piece of work. "Vittoz believed that he could determine the workings of the cerebral hemispheres by feeling their vibrations through the patient's forehead with his hand. By assessing a patient's cerebral responses to simple tasks which he proposed, he believed he could monitor the disordered vibrations and gradually educate a patient to master his brain functions (Trosman 713).

"Eliot was depressed, exhausted, and threatened by fears of a psychotic disintegration." (Trosman 713) Beginning with relatively simple tasks, Vittoz helped the patient gain a sensation of mastery over incomplete functions. After a degree of control was established, more complex duties were assigned. In this approach, the patient established a sense of ego power over previously experienced disequilibrium and chaos in mental processes. Gradually, by focusing on minimum sensations, thoughts, ideas, and actions, Eliot gained a sense of mastery over a mind that he had previously believed to be "deranged," incapable of volition, or of successfully employing energy. Vittoz rejected Freud's psychoanalysis as he believed that the unconscious processes were a danger to his method of treatment. While his method attempted to bring about "unity and integration" of the brain, Vittoz believed that psychoanalysis worked in opposition to the fundamentals of his theory.

Eliot was the last child born to his parents who had already reared enough children before him and had passed their youth where they could give attention to him. Both his parents

were involved in other things, and he almost grew up as a neglected child or at least a child who was never fussed over. His marriage to Vivienne too had not turned out as expected. He had married Vivienne because of her vivacious and exuberant charm and energy. It was an attempt at creating an alternate world for himself in Europe; a family away from "family". He had hoped that her positive energy would enthuse in him some vibrancy, but Vivienne had slipped into an incurable depression thus distancing the two resulting in separation. Instead of being affected by her positivity, Eliot may have been affected adversely by her illness. The fact that Eliot's family, particularly his father, disapproved of his marriage to Vivienne distanced him from them. His father's death in 1919 further disillusioned him and all these incidents became fertile grounds for his mental disequilibrium. Vittoz diagnosed Eliot with "insufficient brain control."

> The predominant symptom complex was depression with exhaustion, indecisiveness, hypochondriasis, and fear of psychosis. His personality was vulnerable to specific injuries that disturbed his narcissistic equilibrium. He was aloof and distant, and he guarded himself against the intrusions of others with an icy urbanity. Compulsive defenses enabled him to isolate his emotions should their impact threaten him with excessive traumatization. Sexuality was a potential danger not only because of intense intersystemic conflict but because instinctual forces threatened him with loss of ego control and dominance. (Trosman 712)

Deep psychopathology may exist in lives that appear tranquil and are relatively in accordance with cultural norms. However, that may be, it would appear to be especially difficult for the artist, particularly the literary artist, to deal with internal conflict through repression, as his attention during the creative process is turned inward and must inevitably reawaken those conflicts that other individuals may be able to suppress (Dalton 47).

> It has been alleged that during manic episodes, periods characterised by elation, people can become more productive. There is some research that describes the connection between creativity and psychopathology, suggesting that this form of emotional distress and instability may contribute to the materialisation of creativity. (Kawas)

Inspiration has been compared to regressive mental states like dreams and madness since ancient times. Aristotle says that poetry "implies either a happy gift of nature or a strain of madness" while Plato talks about the state of "creative madness." Inspiring moments typically involve a flood of novel and exciting thoughts, associations, and images that overwhelm the capacity of the mind to keep up with them in the ordinary course of thought. Many people believe that their flashes of genius come from otherworldly beings like gods, muses, angels, or even demons because they feel so removed from the mundane world in which they normally exist (Dalton 48).

Ezra Pound, an eminent poet and critic, often termed the midwife of *The Waste Land,* edited the poem for Eliot. The poem, which is highly fragmented and complicated, was much more chaotic before it received treatment at the hands of Pound. Pound eliminated several portions and reduced the poem to a great extent. One can only begin to imagine how much more chaos and incongruity must have been in the poem before Pound worked upon it. The poem contains many references to Eliot's and Vivienne's relationship. Many of the lines were removed at Vivienne's insistence but yet several remain. It is worth mentioning here that the two most important people connected to *The Waste Land,* Vivienne and Pound, spent a significant number of years in mental institutes. One can say that *The Waste Land* was a product of three individuals, all three of whom had psychotic issues. "In the years preceding The Waste Land, Eliot was preoccupied with nerves-his own and his wife's; together, they suffered from vague and variously diagnosed emotional and somatic disorders" (Koestenbaum

115) According to Koestenbaum, "Eliot turned his hysteria into an institution, *The Waste Land*, while Vivien suffered a more literal institutionalisation" (118).

Although Eliot insisted on the impersonality theory by stressing that the artist should separate his personality from his artistic creation, most of his poetry is actually a result of his personal feelings and experiences. His statement regarding writing the fifth part of *The Waste Land* is an acknowledgment of mental illness as a catalyst for creativity.

> "It is a commonplace that some forms of illness are extremely favourable, not only to religious illumination but to artistic and literary composition. A piece of writing, meditated apparently without progress for months or years, may suddenly take shape and word; and in this state long passages may be produced which require little or no retouch." (Eliot 142)

While undergoing treatment for his illness, Eliot was helped by Vittoz in realising his latent thoughts, feelings and emotions. Vittoz helped him achieve a cathartic effect which in turn aided Eliot in writing his poem. Eliot had felt "tired and depressed" and was unable to focus on his writing. Vittoz helped him in his reintegration and assisted him in completing small tasks. With this treatment Eliot was provided with an insight into his past experiences, reintegrating and "mixing memory with desire" which Eliot used in writing the poem. The fragments in the poem could be the result of his own fragmented self which he depicts in his work. His attempt at self-exploration or self-unification is reflected in his effort to unify the poem. "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" (line 430), are the poet's way of dealing with his illness and trying to overcome it.

Just like the poet, the poem is a piece of psychotic disintegration but just as Eliot puts his life back and reintegrates himself, so does the poem become a masterpiece. Both undergo disintegration, break into fragments and both emerge as masterpieces through this whole process of psychological crisis; Eliot as the writer of the finest literary piece of modern

literature and *The Waste Land* as the masterpiece. A world laid waste to the vagaries of the war recovers in the end. This is in keeping with Eliot recovering from his depression. His brain or mind, which had become a veritable "Waste Land" is saved from eternal and there is hope for rejuvenation and restoration of normalcy both at the universal and personal level. Thus, we see a peaceful resolution—*Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata./Shantih Shantih Shantih* (43)

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Aesthetics in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*: A Dantean Approach

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Abstract: The present paper studies the influence of Dante on the work of Eliot from the aesthetic point of view, and it is a universal truth that Dante greatly influenced T.S. Eliot's poetry. The great Italian meant more to him than even Shakespeare, whom he thought more varied than Dante, with a greater breadth of humanity, but not so understanding of the heights and depths. He considered Dante's poetry to be "the most persistent and profound influence on my own verse." (*Selected Essays*, p.252). The presence of Dante in Eliot's poems ranges from the quotation used as the epigraph or motto at the head of the first poem, through allusions in *The Waste Land* and inserted English imitations of Dante such as the first line of '*Animula*', to the large-scale adaptation of Dantean themes and patterns of imagery in *Ash-Wednesday*. No simple listing of allusions can properly illustrate that sort of 'borrowing', encompassing Dante's Christian beliefs, attempting the simple beauty of his language, extending the range of his symbols, and recreating the whole feel of his verse. Dante's images frequently appear in Eliot's works. Dante and his visions of 'Hell' influenced Eliot's view of the world as a cold and desolate place.

Keywords: Aesthetics, Imagism, Hell, Universal, Symbol, Philosophy.

Introduction

This paper momentarily reflects on the impact of the incomparable Italian writer Dante on the work of Eliot. Eliot is probably the leading name in the 'Modern Movement' that brought about a revolution in English literature from 1910 to 1930. These revolutions occurred at

about the same time in all the arts, as 'Modernist' demolished all received definitions of what art is, e.g., the prose writings of James Joyce (1882-1941), the paintings of Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), the music of Igor Stranvinsky (1882-1971). Picasso's experiments in painting dislocated conventional subjects by using geometric shapes to represent the body and putting the eyes on the same side of the nose – a visual parallel of Eliot's dislocations in words; we can find related developments in paintings which have reflected through Eliot's 'collage' technique.

Dante, Alighieri

Born in Florence, Italy, around 1265, Dante was the son of Alighiero di Bellincione Alighieri and Bella di Abati, and he grew up among the Florentine aristocracy. Italian poet and scholar Dante Alighieri is best known for his masterpiece 'La Commedia' (*The Divine Comedy*), which is universally considered one of world literature's greatest poems. Divided into three sections—'Inferno', 'Purgatorio', and 'Paradiso'—*The Divine Comedy* presents an encyclopedic overview of the mores, attitudes, beliefs, philosophies, aspirations, and material aspects of the medieval world. Written between 1292 and 1294 in commemoration of Beatrice's death, *Vita Nuova* (*The New Life*) reflects Dante's first effort to depict her as an abstract model of love and beauty. Dante completed *La Commedia*, and other works, including *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, *Convivio,* and *De Monarchia,* while in exile. His most famous work, *The Divine Comedy*, is as rich in science, astronomy, and philosophy as it is rooted in 14th-century Catholicism and Italian politics. The epic describes Dante's imagined journey through Hell and Purgatory to Heaven. *Inferno,* the most popular and widely studied section of *The Divine Comedy*, recounts Dante's travels through the different regions of Hell, led by his mentor and protector, the Roman poet Virgil. *Paradiso* manifests the process of spiritual regeneration and purification required to meet God, who rewards the poet with perfect knowledge (*Poetry Foundation*).

The *Divine Comedy* expresses everything in the way of emotion, between depravity, despair and the innocent vision that man is capable of experiencing. It is, therefore, a constant reminder to the poet of the obligation to explore, to find words for the inarticulate, to capture those feelings which people can hardly even feel because they have no words for them, and at the same time, a reminder that the explorer, beyond the frontiers of ordinary consciousness, will only be able to return and report to his fellow-citizens if he had all the time a firm grasp upon the realities with which they are already acquainted.

Dante has a persistent presence in Eliot's work. The great Italian meant more to him than even Shakespeare, whom he thought more varied than Dante, with a greater breadth of humanity, but not so understanding of the heights and depths, 'deeper degrees of degradation and higher degrees of exaltation' (*Selected Essays* 252). He regarded Dante's poetry as 'the most persistent and deepest influence upon my verse' (*What To Selected Essays* 125) – a comment that can be set against his remark on Laforgue quoted above: Laforgue is an early influence, Dante a lasting one.

Literary Canon: Imagism

The literary movement called 'Imagism' revolved against the Georgian poets' cheap and shallow practice. During the war, there was a strong movement in poetry. It aimed at some drastic changes in poetic theory and practice. Standing as it did for a clear-cut subject, an accurate and economical language, a striking simile or metaphor and a sharply visualised, concrete and sensuous image. Following are the salient features of the Imagist Movement. (*Some Imagist Poets 18*):

- It uses the language of common speech.
- It produces poetry i.e. hard and clear and does not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous. It creates new rhythms and copies old rhythms which merely echo old moods.

- The use of ‘verse libre’ made Imagist very popular.
- Free verse, the theory of speech rhythm, was a unique contribution of the Imagist to modern English poetry.
- Imagism opposes the hollow wordiness of contemporary English poetry and introduces a certain amount of hardness and precision which was the crying need of the time.
- Its main objective is to produce brilliant effects and clear expressions which do away with the vagueness and cloying softness of Georgian poetry.
- Discovering the traditional technique is quite inadequate for articulation.
- The Imagist created a precise diction and concentrated on concrete imagery to effectively express a new kind of consciousness.
- Unquestionably, the Imagist movement was inspired by ‘aesthetic considerations’.
- The Imagist sometimes failed to produce genuine poetry because they were quite conscious of being strikingly different and dissimilar from other poets.

Aesthetics

It is concerned with beauty or the appreciation of the beauty, beauty: it cannot be defined, for truly this is left to each person to decide, beauty to me is being able to connect with someone or someone’s work. Aesthetics, in literature, is the inclusion of references to artistic elements or expressions within a textual work. It's a method used to promote or educate readers about important artistic expression in society.

Literary Approach

The Waste Land is a poem by T. S. Eliot, broadly viewed as one of the main poems of the century. Eliot utilises numerous scholarly and social implications from the western writers

like Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*, as well as Shakespeare, Buddhism, and the Hindu *Upanishads*. The poem shifts between voices of parody and prediction including unexpected and unannounced changes of speaker, area, and time and invoking a tremendous and conflicting scope of societies and writings.

The poem *The Waste Land* is divided into five parts. The first, "*The Burial of the Dead*", presents the different subjects of preventing expectation and misery. The second, "*A Game of Chess*", employs alternating narrations, in which vignettes of a few characters address those topics experientially. "*The Fire Sermon*", the third segment, offers a philosophical reflection comparable to the symbolism of death and perspectives on forbearance in juxtaposition, impacted by Augustine of Hippo and Eastern religions. After a fourth segment, "*Death by Water*", which incorporates a concise expressive request, the culminating fifth section, "*What the Thunder Said*", closes with an image of judgement.

Aesthetics and Dantean implications in *The Waste Land*

The journey of both Dante and the narrator in *The Waste Land* undergo a spiritual quest of their own subconscious; they're opened to the realisation of how they live their lives, exposed to the consequences of the choices of others. Despite the dilemma of memory and wish, love has a prominent role in the aesthetics of Eliot and Dante, both in aggravating the artist's will to create through the direction of superabundant erotic desire, and in being the stuff that sustains a fraternity of mentorship among poets living and dead. Eliot has borrowed various lines from Dante, in the attempt to reproduce, or rather to arouse in the reader's mind and the memory, and thus establish a relationship between the mediaeval inferno and modern life. *The Waste Land* will perhaps remember that the vision of city clerk's trooping over London Bridge from the railway station to their offices evoked the reflection. Eliot intentionally modified a line of Dante by altering it—"sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled."

There are various allusions of Dante's in the poem such as the opening of the poem about the cruelty of April "mixing Memory and desire" (lines 2-3), for example, recalls the lament of Francesca, caught with her lover Paolo in Hell's whirlwind of lust in *Inferno*, Canto V. The allusion is significant to Eliot's aesthetic in the way that it suggests a relationship between the Hell of desire experienced by Dante's lovers and the poet's Hell of desire, which imprisons creativity. There are different suggestions of Dante. The beginning of the poem about the remorselessness of April "blending Memory and want" (lines 2-3), for instance, reviews the mourn of Francesca, with her darling Paolo in Damnation's hurricane of desire in Hellfire, Canto V. The reference is pertinent to Eliot's taste in the manner that it proposes a connection between the Damnation of want experienced by Dante's darlings and the writer's Damnation of want, which detains imagination.

Similarly, as in *Vita Nuova***,** the "final cause" is the craft of poetry and the vocation of the artist. Beyond the hyacinth girl, the artist chooses sublimation and the possibility of a vaster creative engagement when he chooses to overlook romance and look instead "into the heart of light, the silence" (41). Eliot's vision "into the heart of light, the silence" evokes an experience shared by Dante's pilgrim-poet (42), when he walks with the poets of the 'bellas cola' (beautiful school) (*Inf. Canto* IV, 94), a passage in which Dante places himself in kinship with a group of famous poets of antiquity. In the aesthetic paradigms of both Dante and Eliot, an artist's commitment to the vocation of art can mean the entrance into a fraternity of intellects that spans generations, so that love has a prominent role in both poets' notion of the artistic tradition. Along with the other Dantean strains in "*The Burial of the Dead*," Petronius' description becomes a portrait of the aberrant artist, an indication as revolting as the sign written across the gate of Dante's Hell: "Abandon every hope, who enter here" (*Inf. Canto* 3.9). As ominous as the warning Dante places at Hell's gate, the Sibylline reference delivers an imagistic blow.

Eliot's rendering of the adventure narrative as first suggested by the Sibyl at the masthead of *The Waste Land* becomes recognizable again at the end of "*The Burial of the Dead*," the poem's first section, with the protagonist's visit to the psychedelic seer, Madame Sosostris, which is the beginning of a journey which will culminate in his mountain ascent to hear "*What the Thunder Said.*" In the passage, the seer narrates a Tarot card reading (Creekmore 98). This reading plays an important part in the narrative of the artist's development. The hanging men featured by both Dante and Eliot represent the importance of accepting vocational difficulty, the death and rebirth of personal will, and the importance of aligning one's creative will with a greater creative will. Eliot depicts the image of an "Unreal City" in the concluding stanza in which a crowd of people - perhaps the same crowd Sosostris witnessed—flows over London Bridge while a "brown fog" hangs like a wintry cloud over the proceedings.

A title such as *Storm over The Waste Land,* for a collection of essays edited by Robert E. Knoll**,** reminds us that from the first there were extremely hostile critical responses to Eliot, and especially to *The Waste Land*, which is widely seen as not only the most famous and admired but also the most notorious and abused poem of the twentieth century, the most influential but also the most resisted.

Critical Observations

"Eliot's indebtedness to Dante ranges from the quotation and the adaptation of single lines or passages to the deeper influence in concrete presentation and symbolism" (Praz. 361). According to Moynihan and Drew, I shall reiterate that Dante's presence contributes to a positive understanding of Eliot's aesthetics and to the notion that the speaker of *The Waste Land* progresses over the course of the poem. Progress is legible in the speaker's account of his accomplishment and the new, individual poetic voice that emerges. The new voice interprets the translations of Dante that lead the reader through a re-visitation of the artist's

self-sacrifice and self-liberation and testify to the artist's transformed relationship to April's cruel prison of "memory and desire."

Conclusion

In this way, we can find that Dante has a strong presence in not only *The Waste Land*, but in most of the work of Eliot. While critics often consider that *The Waste Land* is a poem without resolution, its Dantean references place the section in a purgatorial context and continue the narrative of the transformation of the poet. The quester's resurrection from "living" to "dying" at the section's start echoes the thunderous rebirth of Statius in Dante's Purgatorio. As the thunder speaks, Eliot interweaves the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* parable with a quote from the imprisoned Count Ugolino of Dante's *Inferno*. In both of these cases, Dante's presence highlights aspects of Eliot's aesthetics, pointing in particular to the role of personal will in the development of the artist's relationship to tradition. This poem with the allusions of great world classics has enriched the knowledge and perspectives of the modern readers.

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What Are The Roots That Clutch, What Branches Grow: Reading Echoes of *The Waste Land* in The Works of Bishnu De and Agha Shahid Ali

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Abstract: This paper discusses the works of two Indian poets, Bishnu De and Agha Shahid Ali, in conjunction with T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. With a hundred years under its wing, the poem has inspired a generation of poets, writers, and critics. This paper argues how *The Waste Land* influences the poetry of Bishnu De, a pioneering figure in Bengali Modernism. Focusing on Bishnu's work from the 1930s, it is argued how he borrows specific visuals, metaphors and concepts from *The Waste Land*. Further, keeping Agha Shahid Ali's 1997 collection of poetry, *The Country Without a Post Office,* in focus, the attempt is to show how *The Waste Land* has influenced the literary and social tradition which Ali skilfully evokes in writing about Kashmir throughout the volume. His multi-disciplinarian use of allusions and references is seen as a direct product of *The Waste Land's* influence. Through these two case studies, I aspire to implicate *The Waste Land's* inspiration in shaping these two poets' poetic methods, form and techniques. The extended aim of the paper is to establish how *The Waste Land*. However, an inherently formative Western piece of Literature built upon inherently Western concepts serves as a crucial literary influence upon works of numerous writers from across the globe, and in this case, from the East. This way, the poem truly succeeds in transcending its spatiotemporal borders.

Keywords: Indian Literature, Indian Writing in English, Bengali Literature, Modernism, Intertextuality, Immigrant Literature, and Indian Poetry

"And as for The Waste Land," remarks Edmund Wilson, nine years after the poem's appearance, "it enchanted and devastated a whole generation" (Wilson 113-4). Wilson here

definitively refers to Western Civilisation as a collective whole as it was left devastated and delineated in the wake of the First World War. Within *The Waste Land*, published less than a decade after the War's end, Eliot holds up the intellectual, social and moral starvation that the West was facing through a microcosmic view of a war-torn London. Taking into account the variety of insights that numerous critics have pointed out over and again, all through the hundred years of the poem's existence, Wilson's claim that it 'enchants' a 'whole generation' rings true.

Alternatively, this paper argues that *The Waste Land* does not remain restricted to enchanting and devastating the Western World alone. In this particular instance, I look at the poetic corpus of Bishnu De, a Bengali Modernist Poet writing during the decade of 1930s, and Kashmiri immigrant poet Agha Shahid Ali's late 20th-century collection of poems, *A Country Without a Post Office.* Despite being separated temporarily and spatially from each other, as well as from Eliot's *The Waste Land*, both these poets are heavily influenced by the poem's avant-garde poetic style and method.

Eliotian Wasteland in Bishnu De's Kolkata

With the advent of authors such as Nissim Ezekiel, Amrita Pritam, Khushwant Singh and the like, Indian Literature and Indian Literature in English achieved a new tone, a new mood, and a new sensation. It began to enter the period of Modernism. To alleviate the situation further was the establishment of the Progressive Writers Association, preluding the advent of the Progressive Writers Movement, often considered to be the very first literary movement in India.

On scrutinising matters further, the literary scene in Bengal had much concurrence with what was prevailing in the nation. When one takes into consideration the decade of the 1930s, a particular group of Bengali poets emerged—they are often spoken of and referred to together because of the very distinct Modernist essence that they brought within Bengali verse

for the first time. In the works of Bishnu De, Amiyo Chakrabarty, Sudhindranath Dutt, Buddhadeva Basu and Jibananda Das, one finds a withdrawal from the blind, spanning note of Romanticism that characterised the poetry of Tagore. While the poetry of Mohitlal Majumdar and Jyotindranath Sengupta—stalwarts of Bengali poetry ruling the earlier decades of the 20th century exhibit the expansive influence of Donne, Swinburne and Rosetti, the new poets of Bengali modernism bring in a wave of different ethos in their work. Their work, in turn, bears traces of influence from the Symbolist movement, the Imagist Movement, as well as the Yeatsian view of inertia and the Eliotian stress of mechanical drudgery. Such, a shift within the reactive psyche of the Modern Day Bengali poet, is promptly captured by the following statement that Jibananda Das himself makes:

> "The practice of Rabindranath's poetry became unsuccessful to give solace to the mind of Bengali poets. At least, a few important Bengali poets tried to step aside and avoid Rabindranath and welcomed the positive or negative vision of Mallarme, Paul Verlaine, Rossenr, Yeats or Eliot." (Das 24)

In particular, Bishnu De's poetry illustrates this difference. In fact, when analysing his poetry, one finds strong Eliotian resonance in his method and his conception of the modern landscape. In this respect, and to aid the paper's primary focus, Eliot's *The Waste Land,* in particular, serves as a primary source of inspiration in the formulation of most of his earlier poetry.

That Eliot's influence upon De is expansive should not appear as a surprising element. Being a student of, and consequently a professor of English Literature, it is inevitable for De to have, read and engaged extensively with Eliot's work. His fascination for Eliot runs clearly in the various essays that he composed, along with nearly 17 of Eliot's poems that he translated: 'Ash Wednesday' as 'Chadaker Gaan', 'The Virgin' as 'Devakimata', 'Eternal Dolour'" as 'Chirantan Mathur' and 'Exile' as 'Dwarakay Nirvasan Pala.'

In *The Waste Land*, De could situate a situational parallelism between Eliot's war-torn, disillusioned London of 1922 and the intellectual, moral stagnation that Bengal faced. This parallelism is fully explored and investigated in much of De's poetry that he wrote during the 1930s. In establishing the parallelism between these two radially extreme environs separated not only spatially and temporally but also culturally, he notes:

> ...we see in Eliot's poetry the poetic and conscious expressions of our doubts and uncertainties, the agony of the civilised mind due to the historic incompleteness of modern life; and the in-comprehensiveness of life itself. For this reason, his poetry… makes those alien wayfarers in troubled lands and self-searching poets of far-off countries obliged to him. (De 11)

Citing the transcendental universality in *The Waste Land* allows De to engage with the poem in a way where he understands the images of futility and stasis not in a restricted manner within the socio-political fabric of post-war western society alone but also in a way that enriches his understanding of the social circumstances of a colonised Bengal state. He borrows this transcendental reading in preparing specific imagery in his poetry.

In *The Waste Land*'s first section, Eliot asks: "What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow/Out of this stony rubbish?" (Eliot, lines 19-20). Harold Bloom remarks how, through the aridity of the images in these lines, "the poem will examine people's lives (branches) and the culture (stony rubbish) in which they live." (Bloom 26). This brings in a flurry of implications: in describing postwar London life if society is frequented with 'stony rubbish', then how can the very medium of life even clutch? If branches and culture thrive amidst such an arid environment, then what impasse has humankind come to, where it is starved of its very essence? Eliot presents all of these implications, and in the very next line answers the same: "Son of man/ You cannot say or guess…" (20-21) he gives a picture of Civilisation that is disillusioned and has lost its way - here there is no life, nor the resources

to survive. The distinct hopelessness of the situation is further elaborated by conjuring the image of a Desert:

A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,

And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,

And the dry stone no sound of water. (Eliot, lines 22-24)

Bishnu De's poetry also exhibits a similar concoction of images:

What a cursed country is this, a barren

Desert under the bitter sun beams

In the consciousness also there is an uncertain

Formless dedicated hate. (Rabindranath; Smriti Sattwa Bhaviswat)

And further:

In the privacy of my mind, I have a burnt field,

Which is my own self

And there I go on ploughing sowing. (Amio-to; Smriti Swatta Bhaviswat)

Bishnu De's wide employment of desert imagery, which he borrows from *The Waste Land*, is particularly interesting. To describe the decadent state of the Bengal colony in his poetry, De likens it to a desert, when the geography of Bengal does not have a single desert landscape. On the contrary, Bengal is the Land of Rivers. For De to use desert imagery in describing the very same place isn't only peculiar but also a potent bearer of *The Waste Land's* apparent influence upon it:

My heart is on a journey to the other side

Of the Baitarani,

There is no boatman and the eyes dazzle

By sandy land stretching to the horizon (Cresidda; *Shrestha Kabita*)

It is not surprising that *The Waste Land*, out of Eliot's rich poetic oeuvre, holds the fiercest command over the psyche of these poets from Bengal. As Buddhadeva Basu, one of the renowned contemporaries of De, admits, Eliot's near-epic poem stood as an eye-opener for himself and his contemporaries just as it captured the torpor of London's post-war modern existence. It also actively illustrated the sense of languor that Bengal was caught in while providing these poets with "a poetic idiom for negotiating the zeitgeist" (Sarkar).

In Bishnu De's famished landscape of Bengal, the viscerality of Love has also given way to mechanisation. Within a space where humans are sceptical of their existence, the inherent emotion of Love finds no occupation. De expresses how the figures in his poetry have become slaves to the routine of Love rather than truly feeling any stirring:

> It is a habit Lily, only a habit
> That I come to your warm happy love-den. (Conditioned Reflex; *Shrestha Kabita*).

The utter mindlessness and sheer mechanical nature of urban existence are crucially highlighted further:

> After this there are tea and cards
> Let us play the bridge or say flash,
> With excitement, smokes, slang and laugh,
> And then return to our flats
> To remember again the abdominal pain and cold and cough,
> Noise, congestion, smoke and chile burning tough. (*Janmashtami*)

Here, the deadening aspect of the futility of life is brought forth. The anonymous speaker juxtaposes a life of unhindered routine, broken only by the remembrance of 'abdominal pain and cold and cough'. Such a strain of perfunctory action along with a similar withdrawal of love is present in *The Waste Land* as well, as Eliot describes the half-hearted attempt at love making between the clerk and the typist:

> The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
> The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,

Endeavours to engage her in caresses
Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
Exploring hands encounter no defence;
His vanity requires no response,
And makes a welcome of indifference.
. . .
She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
Hardly aware of her departed lover;
Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:
'Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over. (235-252)

Such drab and desiccated representation of society in Eliot's poetry finally culminates into a state of what De calls' death in life or life in death' (De). Images of Hell abound in his poetry:

Not in dream, but this is written after
My return from hell,
…
How thousands of life are crushed,
By habits growing in geometrical progression,
Thousands of my own self have seen it,
Suffered from it; (Anwista; Smriti Swatta Bhaviswat)

The image of Death pervading the very foundation of life has a strong resemblance to *The Waste Land,* as Eliot writes:

Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet. (61-65)

Hence, numerous threads of *The Waste Land*'s influence appear upon the poetry of Bishnu De. It is extensively from *The Waste Land*, published in 1922, that Bishnu De borrows most of his

visuals and metaphors from while writing nearly a decade and a half after *The Waste Land's* publication.

The Waste Land's Tradition in Agha Shahid Ali

Agha Shahid Ali was an Indian immigrant poet from Kashmir. Born in New Delhi to the family of Qizilbashi Agha family of Kashmir, he was the first Kashmiri poet to be writing in English. Although Ali immigrated to the U.S. in 1976, his poetry is reminiscent of his yearning and nostalgia for his homeland. His work brings forth his image as the Exiled Poet, longing to return to his home's comfort but unable to do so.

At least for the first decade of Ali's poetic career, Eliot's influence on his writing has been acutely visible. Having completed his graduation and postgraduation in English Literature and earned a Doctoral from Pennsylvania State University, Ali's exposure to Eliot's poetic oeuvre was wide and free. Ali's first poetry collection—Bone-Sculptor, was published in 1972 when he was twenty-three years of age. Constituting 14 poems, the volume not only signalled the potential of the young poet but also set the dominant tone of what the rest of his poetic works would soon resemble in the near future. The poems in this volume mainly deal with subjects of Love, loss, death, cultural dislocation and yearning for the past. The influence of Eliot on this volume is crucially evident. In one of the 1972 reviews of the volume, Sumi Sridharan notes how "[t]he weakness of Shahid's writing is the abstractness of some of the experience and the echoes from Eliot that mar even a good poem like "Bones"'. (qtd. from Katyal).

Akhil Katyal notes how:

> Shahid overdosed on Shelley and Keats until he found Eliot, who was to be cited in his style and content for years afterwards. In his second collection, published while he was finishing his PhD on T.S. Eliot as an editor, he

> recounted his Delhi classrooms at the Faculty of Arts, 'A PhD from Leeds / mentioned discipline, casually / brought the waste-land.' (Katyal)

Manan Kapoor, the author of the first comprehensive biography of Ali, notes how:

> At this point, during his graduation, Shahid first read Eliot's essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'. In it, Eliot redefines the idea of tradition and stresses its importance in poetry before stating that poetry ought to be impersonal… Through Eliot, Shahid learnt how to incorporate poems' allusions to the works of other poets and realised the importance of sound in a poem…he understood, through Eliot's approach, that the artistic genius in poetry emerged only when it was impersonal. (Kapoor)

In his essay *Tradition and Individual Talent,* Eliot attempts to redefine 'tradition' and explains how authors can incorporate that 'tradition' into their work and further it in the process. For Eliot, 'tradition' is formed by the 'simultaneous order'. This order is constantly in flux and altered by every new work of art a poet creates. For a poet, Eliot writes, to be of great significance, they must embody "the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer" (Eliot). He claims that "the most individual parts of [the poet's] work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously" (Eliot).

It is Eliot's understanding of tradition that appears in *The Waste Land*. Eliot incorporates a wide blend of allusions in his poetry; through the inclusion of metaphors, epitaphs, notes and end-notes, Eliot makes *The Waste Land* an admirable polyphony of voices which allude to Dante, Kyd, the Greek myth of the Holy Grail, to Ovid, among other great works of art. Agha Shahid Ali's collection *The Country Without a Post Office,* which forms the focus of this paper, embodies a similar vision of the 'tradition' that Eliot speaks of and uses in *The Waste Land.* Rarely blended so extensively by an Indian poet writing in English before, Ali became one of the very first poets within the Indian tradition to borrow from Eliot his wide

perception of the "mind of Europe" (Eliot) and uses it in his own poetic oeuvre. *The Waste Land* becomes crucial in exercising this influence.

The Country Without a Post Office, published in 1997, is a volume of poetry that extensively and exclusively deals with Ali's homeland of Kashmir. Highly political in nature, the volume seeks to highlight the rapid succession of uprisings that have gripped and continues to torment Kashmir to this date. Kashmir has been the hotbed of political upheavals since the independence of India. Due to turbulent nation-building decisions surrounding the state, geopolitical conflicts with Pakistan, and gradually rising right-wing *Hindutva* fundamentalism, Kashmir has been the recipient of continued turmoil. Besides, with the support of Pakistan and other Muslim-dominated countries, the rising Islamic fundamentalism in Kashmir has captured the valley in an array of political violence. This eclectic state of unrest finds a voice in Ali's collection.

The nightmarish vision of Kashmir in Ali's poetry closely resembles Eliot's modern-day London's Wasteland. In the excerpt below, the influence of *The Waste Land* is evident in the use of images: a vision of dreariness pervades the lines; a sense of isolation, as well as alienation, is rampant as the narrator walks amidst a landscape of bloody trails, abandoned city, or what he calls the 'massacred town':

> In my dream I'm always
> in a massacred town,
> …
> I'm alone, walking among the atrocities,
> guillotines blood-scorched,
> gods stabbed at their altars,
> dry wells piled up with bones,
> a curfew on ghosts ("A Wrong Turn")

In *The Country Without a Post Office*, Ali concocts together a wide blend of literary, geographical and mythical allusions. This assemblage of a wide scholarship is an ode to Eliot's

own diversified usage of the same in *The Waste Land;* at the same time, they primarily serve the purpose of linking Kashmir with other sites of violence, real as well as fictional. Kashmir in Ali's poetry no longer remains confined within the temporal-spatial geographic map of India but is extracted and given a universal appeal. For instance, in his collection, Ali alludes to the Sarajevo crisis thrice and likens Sarajevo to Srinagar:

> Say farewell, say farewell to the city
> (O Sarajevo! O Srinagar!),
> the Alexandria that is forever leaving. ("The City of Daughters")

And again:

> 'I've just come—with videos—from Sarajevo.'
> …
> close-ups in slow motion: from bombed sites
> to the dissolve of mosques in colonnades. ("Correspondent")

Sarajevo, the capital city of Bosnia, 1914 witnessed the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife by a Young Bosnian activist—Gabrilo Princip. The event is often considered to have catapulted the beginning of the First World War. Following the assassination, Sarajevo became the hotbed for anti-Serb demonstrations, riotings and pogroms. In his collection, Ali likens Kashmiri politics to that of Sarajevo.

Further, allusions are also made to warzones in Chechnya and Armenia as these sites are juxtaposed against the ruins of the Kashmiri landscape:

> A woman combs—at noon—the ruins for her daughter.
> Chechnya is gone
> ….
> Like salt in water,
> what else besides God disappears at the altar?
> O Kashmir, Armenia once vanished. ("Villanelle")

The prologue to the collection, *The Blessed Word: A Prologue,* is especially interesting. In it, Ali combines socio-literary reference, along with a historical one, while trying to convey to the reader the current state of the plight that Kashmir is caught in. The epigraph to the prologue

contains a line by Russian poet Osip Mandelstam: "We shall meet again in Petersburg" (Ali). In this poem, Mandelstam tries to recall and recreate Petersburg after the secret political purge in the city that came to be known as *the Leningrad Affair*. *The Leningrad Affair*, under the leadership of Stalin, resulted in the accusation, execution, and sudden disappearances of thousands of officials, alleged communist conspiracy and treason. Mandelstam's poem tries to recreate this very city of Petersburg amidst the bloody and terror-stricken plight of the citizens under murderous political control.

Petersburg in Mandelstam's poem is an imaginary space imbued with nostalgia; as Ali evokes the poem in the epitaph to his collection, he draws a direct implication between Osip's terrorised Petersburg and his own bloodied Kashmir, along with an intrinsic desire to recreate and evoke an image of peaceful and quiet Kashmir, far removed from its current atrocities.

The poem simultaneously evokes the historical figure of Habba Khatun—a 16th-century Kashmiri poet—who sang elegies for her husband, Yusuf Shah Chak while the Mughal King Akbar exiled him. With this allusion, Ali goes back in time and recalls a Kashmir from centuries back in narrating the tragedy of Habba Khatoon while immediately shifting his focus to the Kashmir of the modern-day once again. The temporal shifts inside the poem enable Ali to view the tragedy of Kashmir through the lens of Habba Khatton by establishing smooth conjunction between the two timelines. Ali talks of Habba's lingering grief; "she went among the people with her sorrow. Her grief, alive to this day," *The Blessed Word: A Prologue* (Ali).

Ali also quotes Yelena Bonner, a human rights activist from Russia, in one of the epigraphs to his collection: "No idea, even an idea as close to many Russians as the indivisibility of Russia, can justify a war against a whole people" (Ali). This political intertextuality again brings out the prophetic mould that Ali assumes in his volume in trying to condemn ethnic and religious fundamentalism.

Such wide-spanning instances of political, historical, and mythical integration in Ali's work are heavily reminiscent of the numerous allusions that *The Waste Land* versifies. Eliot incorporates the larger quest narrative of the Holy Grail by combining it with the mythical allusion to the wasteland of Fisher King. Various mediaeval texts take up the running narrative of Arthurian Knights questing for the Holy Grail, the quest symbolising spiritual enlightenment. In many such narratives, the knights come across the kingdom of Fisher King, which is described in bitter aridity, condemned to barrenness; the blighted condition of the land's ruler - Fisher King - was crushed to be sterile, and his sterility permeated his land and subjects. Eliot borrows this literary reference from the King and the Grail. He uses it as a running metaphor to supplement the narrators in *The Waste Land* with a quest to traverse the barrenness of Post-War London in search of intellectual and moral satisfaction.

Dense with literary allusions, Eliot's poem refers to Satyricon of Petronius in its complicated Latin epigraph; to Dante's Purgatory right at the end; it is complete with scholarly testimonials to Shakespearean heroes and heroines, Edmund Spenser, Andrew Marvell, among others. Ali's collection parallels such diversity and evidently looks at *The Waste Land* in colouring the creative acumen behind the ideation of such a method of composition.

Ali assesses the 'tradition' that Eliot speaks of (and himself assesses in *The Waste Land*), but it is not the western canon that Ali turns to. A note of distinct Indianness is pervasive in his poetry: “I can use the Indian landscape and the subcontinent's myths and legends and history from within, and I can do so for the first time in what might seem like a new idiom, a new language— subcontinental English” (Ali)**.**

Through this particular breed of English and poetic method, Ali deviates from Eliot's mannerisms, creating a corpus of work that is individual. He does not blindly imitate Eliot but borrows his method in creating an experimental indigenous blend.

To conclude, Eliot's *The Waste Land* remains a seminal modernist masterpiece. Despite being a heavily Westernised text in terms of composition and implications, it has continued to influence authors across time and geography. For Bishnu De and Agha Shahid Ali - two Indian poets writing in two different languages across two different socio-cultural moments — it is *The Waste Land* that unifies their heterogeneity of vision and miscellany of the poetic method while also simultaneously serving as a literary influence upon both of them.

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