

Critical Analysis of The Waste Land

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Abstract- T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" (1922) is analyzed as a profound spiritual and social commentary

on the pervasive disillusionment of the post-World War I era. This study delves into the poem's deep intertextual dialogue with ancient Indian wisdom, particularly exploring its integration of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad's "Da, Da, Da" mantra (Datta, Damyata, Dayadhvam) and the Bhagavad Gita's philosophy of "death and rebirth" as a pathway to spiritual transformation. Furthermore, the article draws significant parallels between the societal breakdown and spiritual emptiness depicted in Eliot's poem and the aftermath of the Kurukshetra War in the Mahabharata, highlighting a shared narrative of loss of dharma and the enduring psychological scars of conflict. Eliot's extensive academic engagement with Sanskrit and Hindu philosophy is presented as foundational to the poem's unique synthesis of Eastern and Western thought, ultimately arguing that "The Waste Land" transcends pessimism to offer a hopeful vision of redemption through spiritual introspection. It champions ancient wisdom as a perennial guide for navigating modern chaos towards a revitalized existence, a "fresh land."

Keywords - Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Epic, Magnum opus, Sermon, Sublime, Tiresias, Ugolino della Gherardesca

I. INTRODUCTION

T.S. Eliot Life & Works

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born on September 26, 1888, in St. Louis, Missouri, into a prominent New England family with deep roots in American history and culture. This background, while seemingly traditional, would play a crucial role in shaping his perspective as an expatriate and a critic of modern society. His father, Henry Ware Eliot, was a successful

businessman, and his mother, Charlotte Champe Stearns Eliot, was a poet and social worker.

This familial environment provided both intellectual stimulation and a sense of social awareness that would later surface in his work. The family's Unitarian faith also subtly influenced his later spiritual explorations. Eliot received his early education at Smith Academy, where he excelled academically. He then attended Milton Academy, a prestigious preparatory school in Massachusetts.

These formative years instilled in him a strong foundation in classical literature and languages, which would become a hallmark of his poetic style. His time at Harvard University was pivotal. He immersed himself in literature, philosophy, and languages. Key influences during this period included Babbitt's lectures on classical literature and his critique of Romanticism deeply impacted Eliot's early intellectual development, fostering a sense of tradition and order.

The philosopher's emphasis on detachment and the life of the mind resonated with Eliot's developing sensibility. Symons's book *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* exposed Eliot to the French Symbolist poets like Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Verlaine. This encounter was transformative, introducing him to new possibilities in poetic language, imagery, and the exploration of subjective experience.

After graduating from Harvard, Eliot spent a year in Paris (1910-1911), a period of intense intellectual and artistic growth. Paris exposed him to the vibrant artistic and literary scene of the time. He attended lectures at the Sorbonne and absorbed the avant-garde spirit that permeated the city.

It was in Paris that Eliot began to seriously develop his poetic voice. He started writing some of his earliest poems, which would later form part of his groundbreaking debut. These early experiments showed a departure from traditional poetic forms and language. In 1914, Eliot moved to England, a decision that would profoundly shape his life and literary career. He initially intended to pursue doctoral studies but became increasingly involved in the London literary scene.

His marriage to Vivienne Haigh-Wood in 1915 was a complex and often difficult relationship that significantly influenced his emotional and artistic landscape. Vivienne suffered from chronic health problems, and their strained marriage became a source of personal turmoil reflected in his poetry. Eliot's meeting with Ezra Pound was a turning point. Pound, a key figure in the modernist movement, recognized Eliot's talent and became a crucial mentor and editor. Pound's influence is undeniable

in the shaping of Eliot's early work, particularly "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock."

This poem, published in *Poetry* magazine, marked a radical departure from Victorian and Romantic poetic conventions. Its fragmented structure, stream-of-consciousness narration, urban imagery, and themes of alienation, indecision, and social anxiety captured the disillusionment of the modern age. The poem evokes the bleakness and anonymity of the modern city through vivid imagery of "half-deserted streets," "one-night cheap hotels," and "sawdust restaurants."

Prufrock's inner turmoil, his feelings of inadequacy, and his inability to connect with others are central to the poem's impact. The poem's non-linear structure and its allusions to Dante, Michelangelo, and Hamlet contribute to its complexity and its sense of a fragmented modern consciousness. Widely considered one of the most important poems of the 20th century, "The Waste Land" is a powerful and fragmented depiction of post-World War I Europe, characterized by spiritual aridity, cultural decay, and a sense of profound loss.

The poem's structure is deliberately fragmented, mirroring the brokenness of the modern world. It juxtaposes different voices, literary allusions, myths, and historical periods without clear transitions, demanding active engagement from the reader.

Eliot draws extensively from ancient myths and rituals (e.g., the Fisher King, the Grail legend) to highlight the loss of spiritual meaning in contemporary life. The poem paints a bleak picture of modern urban life, depicting its sterility, alienation, and moral emptiness. The poem incorporates various voices and perspectives, reflecting the fractured nature of modern identity and experience.

Eliot acknowledged the influence of these anthropological works on the poem's themes of fertility, myth, and ritual.

During this period, Eliot also began to establish himself as a significant literary critic. His essays, such as "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) and "Hamlet and His Problems" (1919), were highly influential and helped to shape modernist literary

theory. "Tradition and the Individual Talent": This essay introduced the concept of the "impersonality" of the poet and argued for the importance of the poet's relationship to the literary tradition.

"Hamlet and His Problems": This essay famously coined the term "objective correlative," arguing that the emotion in a poem should be evoked through a set of objects, a situation, or a chain of events that act as a formula for that particular emotion. Conversion, Faith, and New Directions (1925- 1940): The Turn Towards Religion. The mid-1920s marked a significant turning point in Eliot's life and work with his conversion to Anglicanism. Spiritual Crisis and Conversion: Eliot's personal struggles, including his difficult marriage and the sense of cultural and spiritual emptiness he explored in "The Waste Land," led him to seek solace and meaning in religion.

His formal conversion to the Church of England in 1927 profoundly influenced his subsequent poetry and thought. "Ash-Wednesday" (1930): A Poem of Repentance and Hope: This poem reflects Eliot's spiritual journey and his acceptance of Christian faith. It is characterized by a more lyrical and meditative tone compared to his earlier work, exploring themes of repentance, purification, and the search for spiritual grace. Religious Imagery and Symbolism: The poem is rich in Christian symbolism, drawing from liturgical language and imagery associated with Ash Wednesday and the season of Lent.

Themes of Renunciation and Renewal: The poem explores the need for detachment from earthly desires and the possibility of spiritual renewal through faith. "Four Quartets" (1936-1942): A Culmination of Philosophical and Spiritual Inquiry: This series of four long poems ("Burnt Norton," "East Coker," "The Dry Salvages," and "Little Gidding") is considered Eliot's masterpiece and a profound meditation on time, memory, history, and the nature of the spiritual life.

Exploration of Time: The poems delve into different conceptions of time – historical time, cyclical time, and the timeless moment of spiritual awareness. Interconnectedness of Past, Present, and Future:

Themes of Incarnation and Redemption: Drawing on Christian theology, the poems explore the significance of the Incarnation and the possibility of redemption through love and faith. Lyrical Beauty and Meditative Tone: The language of "Four Quartets" is rich and evocative, creating a sense of profound reflection and spiritual insight.

Chorus and Poetic Language: Eliot employs a chorus in the tradition of Greek tragedy to comment on the action, and the language of the play is elevated and poetic. The Family Reunion (1939): Psychological and Spiritual Drama: This play blends elements of Greek tragedy with contemporary family drama, exploring themes of guilt, fate, and the possibility of spiritual redemption within a modern setting. The Cocktail Party (1949): Social Comedy with Deeper Undertones: This play, one of Eliot's most popular, uses the framework of a social comedy to explore themes of love, marriage, loneliness, and the different paths individuals take in their search for fulfillment.

The Confidential Clerk (1953) and The Elder Statesman (1958): Later Plays: These later plays continue Eliot's exploration of human relationships, identity, and the search for meaning in a secular world. Continued Literary Criticism and Essays: Throughout his later years, Eliot continued to write influential essays on literature, culture, and society, further solidifying his position as a major intellectual figure. Eliot received numerous accolades in his lifetime, culminating in the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1948. Nobel Prize in Literature (1948): The Nobel Prize recognized his "outstanding, pioneer contribution to present-day poetry."

Influence on Modern Literature: T.S. Eliot's impact on 20th-century literature is profound and undeniable. He revolutionized poetic language, form, and subject matter. His themes of alienation, fragmentation, spiritual crisis, and the search for meaning resonated deeply with the modern experience. Enduring Relevance: Eliot's works continue to be studied, debated, and appreciated for their intellectual depth, linguistic innovation, and enduring exploration of the human condition. His poetry and critical essays

remain essential reading for understanding modern literature and thought.

In 1948, T.S. Eliot won this huge award. The people who give out the prize said he won it because of his really special and new way of writing poetry that had a big impact on how other poets wrote. They also recognized his amazing skill and importance in the world of modern poetry. Think of it like this: before Eliot, a lot of poetry followed certain rules and sounded a certain way. Eliot came along and broke some of those rules. He used language and ideas in a way that felt fresh and different. His poems often showed the confusing and sometimes sad feelings of people living in the modern world after big events like World War I.

His poems, like "The Waste Land" and "Four Quartets," were seen as really powerful and important. They weren't always easy to understand at first, but they were full of deep ideas about life, history, and spirituality. T.S. Eliot won the Nobel Prize because he was a pioneering poet who changed the way poetry was written and whose work was seen as incredibly important and influential in modern literature. They recognized his unique voice and his significant contribution to the world of poetry.

Essentially, "Four Quartets" is a deep dive into time, memory, history, and the search for spiritual meaning. Eliot isn't just telling a story; he's meditating on how the past, present, and future connect, and how we can find moments of timelessness and understanding

II. ELIOT AGE & CONTEMPORARY WRITERS

The age in which T.S Eliot started writing poetry was the age of depression and disillusionment. The end of the nineteen-century came with the beginning of rapid industrialization of England, and with it, an increasing urbanization. Result of this was prosperity that gave birth to evils and affected the very basic aspects of life deeply. Materialistic outlook towards everything and the economic prosperity brought about a breakdown of values cherished so far. Money became more important than human

affection and relationship. The greatness of man became more and more dependent upon his wealth and economic well being.

The qualities of mind and heart, no longer, held much importance. It naturally led to a breakdown of spiritual and religious values and beliefs. Moreover, The First World War worsened the situation i.e., the feeling of loneliness, despair, confusion and cynicism increased. Barzaji comments on the problems caused by First World War, "For example it made many people pessimistic, hopeless and worried". It was the age in which feeling of doubt and uncertainty, and the erosion of human relationship, was hastened and heightened by the new discoveries in the field of psychology.

Freud emphasized that irrationality and the unconscious had a great power to affect human conduct. Irrationality, indeed, came to be regarded as fundamental to human nature. Forces lying deep in human beings could easily triumph over the so-called rationality. This sort of background of instability, uncertainty, confusion and breakdown of values altogether awakened the sensitive heart in T.S.Eliot. It was against this background that he began to work. In the words of Bradshaw, the objective of modern poetry was to put "a stress on transformation, exteriorization, and shock."

His creative works exhibit that man was no longer seen as a rational being as far as his behaviour was concerned. His behaviour was read in ways that would not have been possible before the strides made in the science of psychology.

Family relationships underwent a change. The assessment of the relative roles of man and woman changed. The younger generation and the older generation felt the gap between them widening, resulting in a change of relationship between parent and child. T.S. Eliot wanted to present this situation of modern world through his literature. He wanted to draw attention of his readers to these defects of modern civilization. He is of the view that a poet's aim should not be to entertain. It must have moral and social purpose. Undoubtedly, Modern

civilization is in the verge of decay. It is going very rapidly to drown. People are devoid of any guiding faith. They have no religious faith to hold them, they have no moral values to guide them, they have no cultural roots to sustain them.

So it is quite natural that a society without any faith tends to drift and that is what Eliot has desired to express through his poetry. Not only Eliot, but there are a few others, who have also expressed the same views through their works. To name them, we can refer Irving Babbit John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, H.G. Wells, George Orwell and Aldous Huxley. They all echo the same despairing voice. As Irving Babbit says, "Unless there is a reaffirmation of the truth of inner life in some form, religious or humanistic, civilization is threatened at its base." Similarly the world portrayed in Eliot's poetry poses a threat to man's existence because it is a world which is insignificant; it is Eliot's firm conviction that without faith in God, no scheme for social improvement can work. Preoccupation with the doctrine of progress and worldly pursuits makes us blind to the true significance of time.

We are destined to eternal suffering because we are forgetting our moral and spiritual values.

As M.C. Bradbrook in his work "T.S. Eliot" says, "It is a world devoid of any generally accepted standards of belief." Man in this world fails to justify his existence when life does not appear to have any meaning except barrenness and hollowness. Eliot puts the same idea quite sarcastically, "Birth, and copulation, and death, That's all the facts when you come to brass tacks". Critics have found a lucid and logical development of T.S Eliot's genius from beginning to the last stage of his career. He was a dynamic personality who was changing constantly and harmoniously.

The poem "The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock" depicts that man in his journey from a world of boredom to a world of release, has to encounter the great challenging questions pertaining to the problem of his existence. Religion has lost its spiritual appeal; society is lifeless without any direction; people meet one another wearing unusual makes due to which there is no communication among

them; callous indifference of this moral decay and spiritual vacuum, yet the desire of emotional rapport is still blazing in their heart. For instance we have 'The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock.' This poem is the confession of J.Alfred Prufrock, one of the denizens of this infernal world. Its epigraph is a brief commentary on man's existence on this earth. Nature or the outer world, symbolises his mental state of inertia.

The "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" delves deep in the emotional and physical predicament of life. Prufrock belongs to the contemporary aristocratic world. His society shows the perfection of urban civilization with its sophisticated luxury, artificiality, hypocrisy, loneliness etc. it is a world disgusted with itself, bored to death and finding some relief in love and gaiety. The words of Prufrock come straight from the drawing room and fashionable clubs. This modern civilization preserved its formal manners and mechanical bits of conversation. Actually, this society is rotten and hollow at its core. It has no emotional or spiritual reservoir of strength. Eliot comments, in this modern world evening spreads, "Like a patient etherized upon a table; with smell of steaks in passageways".

Eliot was quite aware of the degeneration, which was prevalent in his age and through his various poems, he has tried hard to raise a voice against this disintegration and degradation. In his poem "Hollow Men", these hollowmen show spiritual emptiness and barrenness. It contains the poet's reflection on the subject of human nature in the world and the relationship of this world to another, the world of death and eternity. Similarly, his poem "Gerontion" affirms the views of Eliot about modern life and civilization. The action of the poem is set not in any place, but in the mind of the old man himself. The old man is thinking of his past and present and also his physical surroundings.

There is no movement towards any set purpose or goal. There is hardly any progress in the development of thought. The poem ends in the same as it begins. The words 'dry season' of the last line echo the words of the first line 'dry month'. The 'dry brain' and 'dry season', however, achieve their grandest dimensions in his most famous poem as

Elizabeth Drew comments, "Money orientation of values, spiritual sterility, death of intuition and the birth of empirical search for knowledge, all symptomatic of the post Renaissance Commercial civilization with no religious communion or human sense of community, a night mare world of isolation and instability, of restless nervous and intellectual activity, emotional stagnation and spiritual drought." "Gerontion" is an inner monologue.

The thoughts of the protagonist recollected in tranquility reflect the essential barrenness of modern civilization. Eliot says that modern life is vain and futile like the days passed by the old man. He is quite disillusioned about himself and about the purpose of modern world. He regards himself 'dull head' 'among windy spaces'. In this poem Eliot uses the technique of self-irony. Gerontion consoles himself by saying that it would have been useless to keep the passion alive for it must have been perverted by the nasty touch of empirical investigation. Not only this, Gerontion's condition is more pitiable as he has lost his power of sense perception, "I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch." Thus, the poet comments on spiritual and moral bankruptcy of man.

His seminal work "The Waste Land" also describes the hollowness of modern society. The lack of spirituality in modern world is reinforced by the reflection of the mythical waste land devoid of water, the source of life. This is a difficult and complex poem and requires repeated readings to understand its meaning and implications. Cooper's advice "The key to the poem may lie, paradoxically, in the fact that there is no single key to its meaning. Indeed, the poem needs to be read in a way that was unfamiliar to many contemporary readers of poetry in 1992 and still challenges readers today". The poem is divided into five sections which illustrate various aspects of degenerated modern world. The first part "The Burial of Dead" makes us aware of the spiritual barrenness in modern man's life.

Eliot conveys a sense of apprehension and incomprehension in various characters presented in different situations. The lack of understanding is not helped by Madame Sosostris, a fortuneteller, whose

enigmatic pronouncements only make sense later in the poem. The city, in particular London, is a grim place of people unable to live fully or see a way out of their deadness. The lines from poem express it clearly, "What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow, Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man, You can not say or guess, for you know only, A heap of broken images.....". The part two "A Game of Chess" offers two scenes showing the essential emptiness in a lavishly decorated room, a rich lady whose constant questions express her anxiety and lack of control.

The second scene is set in a London pub where two women discuss the predicament in which Lil finds herself. The modern man is mentally impotent. He can't think anything positive. The theme of sexual dissatisfaction is presented in Part III, "The Fire Sermon", where Eliot, ranging about in time from Buddha and St. Augustine to the present day, has tried to show how man's aspirations to a higher i.e. more spiritually mode of living are constantly thwarted by his subservience to his bodily appetites and his self-awareness. Fredrick J. Hoffman rightly summarizes the situation, "Religious incentive is lacking, belief fails of a divine purpose, love has no real opportunity for issuing either in a meaningful sexual relationship or in life itself. The full terror of this situation is presented in terms of a dramatic analogy of faith and love given a concrete, social, human meaning".

Next, the part IV "Death by Water" highlights materialistic degeneration. In this section, a drowned merchant's body decomposes in the sea. He seems to have achieved nothing. Further, the last section "What The Thunder Said" begins with a description of the death of Jesus and goes on to relate a difficult journey through the desert to an empty chapel. However, the poem ends with a hope of salvation. The poem gives an advice to regenerate themselves and wishes that everywhere in the world should be "Shantih shantih shantih". "Eliot suggests by his poem the people of Twentieth Century Europe, who are really sightless, blind to their own fate and lack of faith. The structure of the poem itself is an indication of this unfaithful society which is assorted and broken."

The meaninglessness of regulated life without any higher purpose in other poems also. As in "Ash Wednesday" there is an innerdrama of the clash between flesh and spirit. In the beginning, it might have been a purely intellectual emotional affair, but when the protagonist makes effort to act in accordance with his belief, he fluctuates between the world and the word. T.S. Eliot in his Selected Essays comments, "One of the unhappy necessities of human existence is that we have to find things out for ourselves". The protagonist in "Ash Wednesday" is in the Purgatorio of his soul; behind him in the vast inferno of the world and before him is the Paradiso.

He has rejected the delusory is that we have to find things out for ourselves". The protagonist in "Ash Wednesday" is in the Purgatorio of his soul; behind him in the vast inferno of the world and before him is the Paradiso. He has rejected the delusory world of the false dreams of happiness, yet it tempts him. He is too weak to erase from his mind the memories of his past sensual life and to overcome the temptations of the illusory attractions of pleasures at present. Yet he has a will to transcend the material world and get at the spiritual world. Therefore, it becomes a matter for exploration and self.

Eliot's Contemporaries: T.S. Eliot, Criticism and Fellow Writers:

T.S. Eliot's work was not welcomed by all, though admired and loved by many. There were people who even thought that his poems were not actually poems, because of his constant references to other people's works and their quotations.

Eliot however considered necessary and gave much importance to it. Eliot himself was known for his criticism and even influenced the New criticism. He was considered by many to be the greatest critic of the 20th century. His criticisms were seen to be very penetrating and detailed. Eliot was known for his writing of Metaphysical subjects and many writers and poets were influenced by him. His own work *The Waste Land*, was considered by many to be an hoax or joke and his critics were not very soft on him.

"Catholicity", which was published in 1947, as a contribution to the process which resulted in the Church of England's Report on Doctrine (1948), was

in fact produced by a group, with a lot of senior clergy in it. Eliot was a member of this group in 1946. A Commission produced, *The Revised Psalter*, in 1963 and Eliot was made to be part of it, by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1958. C.S. Lewis was a member of this commission and a not so sweet relationship between them, turned into a friendship.

C.S. Lewis

C.S. Lewis himself called Eliot's Literary criticism to be "unscholarly and superficial". T.S. Eliot received a letter from C.S. Lewis, in 1934, with the following comment, "I hope the fact that I find myself often contradicting you in print gives no offence; it is a kind of tribute to you—whenever I fall foul of some widespread contemporary view about literature I always seem to find that you have expressed it most clearly. One aims at the officers first in meeting an attack!" Antagonism and admiration were often seen in C.S. Lewis view on T.S. Eliot. Fellow writers and critics like Ted Hughes and Hugh Kenner how however expressed great admiration and love for his work.

Ezra Pound:

Another American poet who was a big influence on Eliot and a key figure in Modernism. He pushed for concise, clear, and impactful language.

William Butler Yeats:

An Irish poet who started in a more romantic style but evolved into a powerful modernist voice, exploring Irish identity and mythology in new ways. Virginia Woolf:

Though more famous for her novels, Woolf also experimented with language and stream of consciousness in ways that connect with modernist poetry. She and Eliot knew each other and had opinions about each other's work.

James Joyce:

Like Woolf, Joyce was a novelist, but his innovative use of language and exploration of inner thoughts in works like *"Ulysses"* aligns with the modernist spirit.

H.D. (Hilda Doolittle):

An American poet associated with the Imagist movement, which focused on clear, precise images in poetry.

III. T.S ELIOT & THE ASPECT OF "MODERNISM" IN HIS POETRY

T.S Eliot was one of the twentieth century's major poets primarily due to the way his unique poetic style changed the face of Modernism. He wrote poetry using different styles and images which differed distinctly all through the whole of his poetic career. Eliot used paradox throughout his poetry, and also wrote theory on the notion of bringing together disparate ideas in order to create something new. Many of these contrasting notions come from the various voices he uses throughout his poetry, such as, and most famously in, *The Waste Land*. Eliot's name is that which is largely associated with Modernism, and this is largely due to his approach on bringing notions and voices – polar opposites at face value – and having them coalesce; an idea adopted from the Metaphysical poetry of John Donne, George Herbert and Andrew Marvell amongst many.

What truly makes Eliot's poetry modern is the variety of such disparate ideas and voices, 'and the way Eliot builds extraordinary bridges between the voices, the tones and the dramatic levels.' This can be noticed from Eliot's early poetry such as 'The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock,' to his monumental *The Waste Land*, and also in his later poetry, showing that although Eliot may have changed some aspects of his poetry in terms of style and theme, he retained that aspect that was most integral to him: keeping poetry modern. In 'Tradition and the Individual Talent,' Eliot changed the way poetry was to be written and read. The essay was a cultural indictment about the importance of art. Here, Eliot attempts to reconcile the two contrasting and disparate ideas; that of tradition and individuality.

Tradition is that which connects society to the past, something which seems contradictory to individuality at face value; they stand on opposing poles. However, tradition for Eliot was 'not a rule to be followed, but a largely unconscious inheritance,'

which is continually modified within the poet. The way forward was to combine the two notions. Eliot wanted to make a case for tradition without parting from the idea of individual talent.

He begins by outlining the misconception people have of praising artists who bring forth completely new compositions forward, 'dwell[ing] with satisfaction upon those poet's difference from his predecessors; we endeavour to find something that can be isolated in order to be enjoyed.' Contrarily, it is only when 'we approach a poet without his prejudice' that one will find 'that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be in those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously.' Like Pound and other modernists, Eliot was invested in those paradoxes of tradition in relation to creativity in that 'the most original talent is not only bound to tradition but is to most likely reaffirm it.' Eliot's essay explains that for one to be contemporary, one must be in touch with the history of art thus far as well as the present.

Thus, the artist must obtain a 'historical sense of perception, not only of its past, but of its presence.' Eliot's sense of modernism comes through in this essay since it highlights his core beliefs on poetry and the poet. The correlative principle is that no artist has complete meaning in isolation, but must be judged 'for contrast and comparison, among the dead.' Eliot's other criticisms and poetry rest heavily on this theory where 'the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past.' His poetry thus abounds with echoes of the great works of literature, and often times these are merged together in a seemingly disoriented way. However, the new links that are formed between these classical tales establish new relationships out of seeming contradictions, and 'present to the mind of the reader a parallel, by means of contrast.' 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' exhibits the roots of this philosophy, containing the fragmented thoughts of the protagonist Prufrock, while he is struggling to conduct himself in a social situation. Discordant contrasts are more evident in Eliot's later poetry, which further develops the bridging of these contrasting ideas. *The Waste Land* itself can be

thought of 'as a sequence of attempts to unify the world through the unification of individuals. The one-eyed merchant merges into the Phoenician sailor – the latter being not so wholly different from Ferdinand of Naples. Similarly, the women in the poem are one woman, emblematic for the entire gender.

The two sexes meet in the profit, Tiresias, who is 'throbbing between two lives'; an 'Old man with wrinkled female breasts.' The Waste Land established a new mode of writing through its disparate connections. Eliot purposely interweaved fragments from different texts in order for readers to glimpse at the traditions of the past. The goal for a poem such as The Waste Land was partly to allow people to see the connections and knowing the past – where references were taken from – and to make new connections in relation to the modern world. Eliot's connections significantly changed Modern poetry.

The Wasteland became 'the poem from which most modern verse in English has flowed – the poem every poet today finds in [their] path, the poem that once and for all changed our idea of what to expect of a modern poem and a modern world.'

Eliot succeeded in bringing together disparate ideas and voices together firstly by looking back to his predecessors, and applying fragments from their poetry to his own. His poetry, most famously The Waste Land, is filled with fragments taken out of older literature and placed in a new context. As Eliot declared himself in his essays, the poet does not have complete meaning alone. Looking back to one's ancestors, all the while being a part of the present day, would allow an ordinary writer to transcend into a true contemporary. In his essay 'What Dante Means to Me,' Eliot continues this line of thought by using Dante in his poetry in order 'to establish a relationship between the medieval inferno and modern life.'

Here, again, Eliot is seen taking two things that do not seem to fit together well, Medieval past and modernity – creating a bridge where they are not yoked together, as how Ben Jonson seems to think of disparate ideas, yet merged to create a new idea.

This philosophy is found in many of Eliot's critical papers can be seen even in his pre-Waste Land poems. 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' is an early work where Eliot depicts the fragmentation of modern life through the displaced images in Prufrock's narrative. The fragments in his later poetry all interconnect to depict a new and modern way of understanding the twentieth century. In poems such as The Waste Land and Four Quartets, Eliot illustrated the fragmentation of the society he lived in through images showcasing disconnectedness, all the while simultaneously creating a sense of hope for a better and united world.

In the year 1922, Eliot's The Waste Land was published. It was also a year where many Modernist movements occurred and when the aftermath of The First World War set the tone for what followed. The poem itself produced a sense of shock. The Waste Land both 'extended and dislodged tradition'; it broke away from Romantic poetry and instead returned to the wit of the Metaphysical poets. Eliot's notion of marrying two polar opposite ideas and having them coalesce is one taken from the poetry of John Donne, George Herbert and Andrew Marvell. Eliot saw that the Metaphysical poets managed to capture seemingly disparate concepts and uniting them; they were able to 'feel their thought[s] as immediately as the odour of a rose.

When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary.' The Metaphysical poets used conceits, in which the ideas they expressed in their poems had no clear-cut connection between them. In one of John Donne's poems, 'A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning,' the physical separation of two lovers is compared to a compass: 'Our two souls, therefore, / If they be two, they are two so, / As stiff twin compasses are two.' Eliot argues that conceits go further than merely comparing two unrelated ideas – they create 'a development by rapid association of thought which requires considerable agility on the mind of the reader.

In his essay on the Metaphysical poets, Eliot emphasizes how 'the most powerful effect is

produced by the sudden contrasts of associations,' and this is reflected in his own poetry. The Waste Land, for example, is filled with so many allusions that it is still to this day very much open to interpretation. While the poem's contemporaries looked upon the poem as radical and meaningless, new readers are astounded by the shifting tones and alternating voices. Critics today still argue on which voice dominates the poem, if any. The poem treats myth, religion, history, and art as subject to the same fragmentation as it does modern life. Nothing escapes 'the cruellest month' of April, which mixes 'Memory with desire, stirring / Dull roots with spring rain.' Ultimately, what makes Eliot's poetry unique and modern is his ability to unite these voices and tones, as well as the poem's many allusions.

Disparate and contradictory notions are more evident in Eliot's later poetry, however, there are elements which come through in his early poetry which pre-empt his later thoughts. Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' is one of Eliot's significant early poems in which his style of modernism is set, and in which the rest of his poetry follows. It reinforces and varies 'the note of boredom with different images of staleness.' Eliot explains the effect of 'Prufrock' in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent.' The individual parts of all aspects of poetry are affected by a wholly new element which is added on to it. 'Prufrock' is not like Eliot's later poetry where contradictory notions are placed alongside one another in a seemingly strange unison. However, Prufrock's voice is that which lingers throughout Eliot's entire career. The poetry post-Prufrock becomes even more fragmented so, by the time Eliot came to writing The Waste Land, the voice in the poem had completely disintegrated. Eliot's Prufrock' is 'originary in the way it prompts succeeding poems to readjust their relations, propositions, [and] values,' and sets the tone for the poet's modernist style. Besides its fragmentary themes, the poem's form highlights the characteristics of modern poetry. Eliot was highly influenced by the French symbolists who thought that it was impossible to use conventional language to describe and depict sensations as they are experienced. For this reason, Eliot argued that poets should look for a way to express their emotions

through an 'objective correlative': 'in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.'

Thus, through the use of the objective correlative, Eliot mirrors the style of Donne, Herbert and other Metaphysical poets alike. He has found a way to be able to connect a variety of elements together, building bridges between seemingly disparate notions. The poem is littered with symbols, all of which represent certain emotions. The corruption of city life is described with the imagery of 'half-deserted streets,' 'cheap hotels,' and 'sawdust restaurants,' while the 'yellow fog' can be identified as the objective correlative for the protagonist's inertness.

Eliot's use of figurative language in this poem reflects his fragmentation from the rest of society. One example is the way Eliot discusses humanity through a conceit using human body parts; the reference to detached body parts – hair, hands, eyes, faces – reinforces the idea of the loss of humanity by reducing human beings to fragments. Prufrock seems to think of himself only in terms of the 'bald spot in the middle of [his] hair.' He worries about the face he must present to the world; even though his 'necktie is rich and modest,' he worries about what '[t]hey will say: 'But how his arms and legs are thin!' This objective correlative in 'Prufrock,' 'implies that people are isolated from each other just like their body parts in the modern world and this leads to loneliness among people.' Further more, the poem abounds

"with fragmented sentences such as, And time yet for a hundred indecisions, And for a hundred visions and revisions, Before the taking of a toast and tea." 1

According to Güven, the fragmentation in these lines correlate with the inconsistency and dissonance of modern life. Additionally, the unequal number of lines and speech rhythms indicate the chaos which occurred during the twentieth century. The poem ends where it began, with Prufrock unable to explain himself; 'It is impossible to say what I mean!' Eliot's most important achievement with 'Prufrock,' lay in

the new poetic tone it produced. Eliot broke away with 'the traditional voice, intonation, and cadence of previous verse. His new tone was angular, difficult and complex.' As with Eliot's later poetry, the disparate lines, and images in 'Prufrock' aim to merge different aspects of the modern world together, and form a new unified whole.

It is not about highlighting separate features of the twentieth century, however, producing diverging images beside each other emphasizing its entirety. Thus, Eliot created a style through 'Prufrock' which was original through its disparate imagery and which, in doing so, spoke volumes about modern culture. There are themes which are shared at the end of Eliot's poetic career which were present at the very beginning, such as with 'Prufrock,' the opening poem of his first book.

'Prufrock' is divided into an outward personality and a thinking, sensitive inert being. Already in his poetry, there is a dissociation between the inner self and the outer personality; his inner-self and the relationship with the world is portrayed as a sharp contrast to the timid, nervous man who worries how he may appear to others, 'My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin – / (They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!)." It is a dissociation which 'is continually ascribed to a failure of nerve, an essential timidity.' There lies this timidity in many of Eliot's other poems, such as the speaker in *The Waste Land*, who fails to address the hyacinth girl.

The speaker recalls when he meets the hyacinth girl for the second time, 'when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden, / Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not / Speak'. Similarly, hollow men are hypnotized by eyes they 'dare[d] not meet in dreams.' According to J.C.C Mays, 'Eliot's heroes fail to confront their own selfhood from the beginning, whether this is conceived as a Dantesque heart of light or a Conradian heart of darkness.' With 'Prufrock', there lay a 'dandyish irony'; the polyphonic *Waste Land*; and the meditative tone of Eliot's later religious poetry. This begs the question as to which poetic voice should be characterized as 'the real Eliot. According to Malcolm

Bradbury, the answer to this lay 'in the variety itself, and the way Eliot builds extraordinary bridges between the voices, the tones, and the dramatic levels.'

Certainly, it is this way with his poetry; Eliot's ability to connect disparate notions to coalesce into new meaning is his defining characteristic as a modernist writer. Thus, the movement in his poetic style may be thought of in the same way. For one of the reasons Eliot is such a monumental figure in the twentieth century is that he was always seeking to define 'what kind of creature the poet of

modernity might be.' In his essay on Donne and the other Metaphysical poets, Eliot claims that 'when a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experiences in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes.' Eliot established the need for the modern poet to be able to recover a 'wholeness of sensibility, a modern "wit," where thought and feeling are reconciled.'

The Waste Land is a poem in which many things converge. Eliot incorporates many myths into the poem, at times placing them adjacent to mundane scenes, such as when the rape of Philomela in 'A Game of Chess' is alluded to again – 'jug jug jug jug jug / So rudely forc'd' – as the love scene between the typist and her lover takes place in the 'The Fire Sermon.' The structure of the poem is not a consistent narrative; it takes the reader from the collapsing of huge empires to the pitfalls faced in a rudimentary urban life, leading to a vision of possible salvation, while cities fall. 'If the detail here is difficult, the underlying myth of a search for fertility and redemption is not hard to see.'

He is tying the end of the world with the beginning, as well as providing a possibility of salvation for the collapsing modern world. The fragments of older poetry taken by Eliot to compose his pieces make their content disparate. The method of fragmentation 'was a way of relating the past to the present, the mythic and religious sensibility to the world of the mundane, the history of art to its contemporary task.' In fact, the poem can be said to be made up almost entirely of different fragments,

such as in the epigraph of the myth of the Sybil from Ovid to its allusions to Dante. The opening reference to the cruel April month 'mixing/ Memory and desire,' can be attributed to Dante's lament for Francesca caught with her lover, Paolo, in the pit of Lust in Hell, in Canto V. This allusion is relevant to Eliot as it suggests a relationship between Dante's Hell of desire experienced by the lovers and the poet's Hell of desire which stunts creativity.

Due to its many allusions and connections, the poem's narrative appears inconsistent; *The Waste Land* 'is a poem of anti-climax, of contemporary sterility, and it is, therefore, tempting to read all its many poetic echoes and illusions as a series of parodies, where the poetic dignities of the past are mocked by the vulgarities of the present.' Thus, the lyrical quality is set there to create an opposite effect – 'O the moon shone bright on Mrs Porter / And on her daughter / They wash their feet in soda water.' However, the pattern of the poem is more complex. Several of the five sections begin by drawing upon and making a pastiche of the literature of the past, such as the very beginning of the poem where Eliot draws upon the April month in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and changes the April of regeneration as it being 'the cruellest month.'

These images then move on to a variety of scenes from the modern world, displaying modern despair and sterility. What lay behind these lyric arrests are evocations of pain and suffering, modern fragility and the suffocating presence of endless anxiety. Precisely due to these elements within the poem, Malcolm Bradbury asserts that Eliot 'becomes the great lyricist of the fragile sensitivities of the present.' The poem's broken images, seemingly contradictory and disparate, are used to create the desolate and fragmented image of a wasteland. The wasteland Eliot depicts is a moral one, however, it is also intellectual, socio-political, as well as physical because nothing grows out of the earth except for dead bodies, 'That corpse you planted last year in your garden, / Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?'

Eliot's declaration that the modern poet should reconcile intellect and feeling to create a new

disparate awareness – one that encompasses not one aspect of modernity but many – is most clear in *The Waste Land*. Tiresias, the 'old man with wrinkled dugs,' is there to serve this function. This sense of the double-gender allows him to read the world from two points of view, reconciling and integrating not only the male and the female, yet the past and present, and 'the relation of things foretold to the events of time.' *The Waste Land* went through countless amounts of Ezra Pound's edits one being the poem's original epigraph. One of the most disparate insights in Eliot's poem is the change he made in the epigraph to prelude *The Waste Land*. With Pound's aid, Eliot exchanged a section from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* to a passage from the *Satyricon*.

In the latter text, a Sybil who wished for eternal life now longs for physical death. Unlike the original epigraph, where Eliot quotes Kurtz's 'cry that was no more than a breath – "The horror! The horror!'", the passage of the Sybil 'only ambiguously relates to the contemporary situation Eliot evokes in the poem.' The Sybil's longing for the end of life seems to contrast significantly with the opening of the poem which, according to Harriet Davidson, 'seems to yearn for the living death the Sybil can no longer bear.' The story of the Sybil serves as another disjointed piece of the entire poem.

The epigraph of a text sets the tone; thus, it is very note worthy to acknowledge the great differences between Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and the *Satyricon* – there is no apparent connection between the two. While the Sybil wishes to escape the futility of life, Kurtz's response of horror 'is not to an empty or even necessarily meaningless life, but to his rather too full embrace of human possibilities quite beyond the bounds of "proper" behaviour.' Davidson argues that the change 'suppresses Eliot's appreciation of his contemporaries, instead impressing upon the reader the seriousness of classical scholarship.' However, both showcase different aspects of the modern life Eliot saw to depict in his poem.

These two episodes are no different from the many other disparate images throughout the poem as they embody contrasting aspects of modernism in the twentieth century. However, they can only be disseminated once the reader is aware of the original epigraph. It is interesting to note the different stance the entire poem would have had should the first option have been retained. Ultimately, these two epigraphs are contradictory instances which serve to create new meaning when one is set alongside the other. Both Kurtz and the Sybil showcase that death is not the only horror. Kurtz's cry of agony at the horror of his life and death are mirrored with the Sybil's repugnance to a sterile and changeless world without the possibility of death, life, loss, or love. The Waste Land implies both horrors. Throughout the poem, there is a contrast between the images of the 'little life with fried tubers,' and dry desert, with rain and the sea.

'This voice speaks with authority and finality as it recurs in scenes throughout the poem where the vision of barrenness and revulsion from life is intensely clear and controlled. This voice contrasts with the babel of many voices speaking in metonymically rendered narrative scenes full of movement and change. These different voices range between class and gender, human and non-human voices of the nightingale, the cock and the thunder, and the many voices from literature in the various allusions within the poem. The poem's many abrupt changes, as well as the mutations in the voices in the poem, blur the boundaries between the characters' identities, which further increases the reader's confusion about who is speaking.

These modes of sterile propriety and fertile impropriety cause despair in their own way, however, neither is entirely repudiated. What is responsible for much of the drama in the poem arises from the mixing and interweaving of these two modes as 'desire disrupts order and desire for order sets up paradoxical and unbearable tensions.' The poem thus frustrates the reader who expected to follow its themes and images in an orderly way. Rather, its form depicts the mutability which arose in modernist literature from the very opening of the poem in its various tones and voices. Written after The Waste Land, Four Quartets uses language and allusions to

parallel Eliot's perception of the cyclical, repetitive patterns of life and death.

While The Waste Land focusses on man's relationship with a fragmented culture, Four Quartets deal with man's relationship with the divine, the universe and time. The Four Quartets are abundant in the use of paradox, which allows two contradictory notions to simultaneously exist within the reader's mind. Thus, in these poems, disparate notions are portrayed through the ambiguity of language itself as well as in his practice of alluding to other texts through intertextuality. Each of the five sections considers spiritual existence, consciousness and, most significantly, the past's relationship to the present. 'Burnt Norton,' the poems first installment which focuses on time, opens with the paradox where a brief moment of eternity is caught;

"Time present and time past

Are both perhaps present in time future And time future contained in time past" 2

In these lines, Eliot sets forth the metaphysical paradox of time. How can the present moment lay in the future, and how can past event lay concurrently with the present and the future? Here Eliot claims that it is fact that the past and the present both exist in the future in the same way that the future exists in the past. Eliot creates insights within the reader's mind 'through poetry's emotional, hypnotic manipulations' which force the reader to endure the intellectual contradictions and paradoxes of life until Eliot, the poet, 'is completely ready to abandon himself to the idea of the timeless.'

Four Quartets is filled with paradoxes which resolve themselves after the paradox has been issued. This vies well with Eliot's idea of poetry; that contrary ideas are presented abreast one another only to create a larger concept within the reader's mind; such as:

"Footfalls echo in the memory

Down the passage which we did not take" 3

These footfalls occur where they could not possibly echo, '[d]own the passage which we did not take.

However, the paradox is resolved since the echoes occur 'in the memory' where anything is possible. The second quartet, 'East Cocker' begins with a reference to Mary Queen of Scots. As she is about to die, Mary says, 'In my end is my beginning.' In his poem, however, Eliot reverses this paradox, ending 'East Cocker' with 'In my beginning is my end.' In altering the famous words of the Scottish queen, Eliot turns despair into hope through the power of paradox. He does so in many other instances within this section in Four Quartets,

"In order to possess what you do not possess You must go by the way of dispossession. as well as, We must be still and still moving Into another intensity For a further union" 4

Eliot seems to be presenting an answer to the problems he saw with modern life in a paradox. By bridging together two seemingly contradictory concepts, Eliot is creating unity which can be

mirrored in society. In 'The Dry Salvages,' Eliot again invokes paradox, portraying 'the way forward [as] the way back,' up as down, and time the healer as time the destroyer.

The voices of the sea in this section may represent voices from the past:

The sea howl
And the sea yelp, are different voices
Often heard together: the whine in the rigging,
The menace and the caress of waves that breaks on water
And the wailing warning from the approaching headland
Are all sea voices, and the heaving groaner
Rounded homewards" 5

The sea, which is made up of different voices, may allude to those voices of the great predecessors, which culminate in a 'historical sense of perception, not only of its past, but of its presence.' Here their presence is felt again, not as different fragments placed aside one another, but as a 'wailing warning' to return 'homewards'. Thus, 'the way forward is the way back.' The voices of the sea can be linked to those found in The Wasteland which

also is suffused with an array of different characters, however, in 'The Dry Salvages' the multitude of voices are speaking as one. Eliot manages to 'form new wholes throughout the poem, merging not only individuals but different cultures and different moments in history.' The last section of Four Quartets, 'Little Gidding,' is largely concerned with the past, present, and future and how each generation of humanity seem to be connected.

"Whatever we inherit from the fortunate We have taken from the defeated
What they had to leave us – a symbol: A symbol perfected in death.
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well By the purification of the motive In the ground of our beseeching." 6

The final section of 'Little Gidding' mirrors the fifth movement in The Waste Land in that it too speaks of a new beginning through the end of the world; 'What we call the beginning is often the end/ And to make an end is to make a beginning.' At the end of The Waste Land, Eliot, quoting the Upanishads, writes, 'Datta. Dayadhvam. Damayata. / Shantih shantih shantih' 'The Peace which passeth understanding' Eliot explains to the reader in the poem's notes on why he used this particular reference. Here there is still no rain insight – the arid wasteland remains as it was at the very beginning. However, there is a possibility of rain. There is hope, something which does not even seem possible in such a world. The voice here is that coming from the dawn of Western civilisation and speaks directly to the inhabitants of the wasteland.

The poem ends not with an achievement of peace, yet with the potential for it. Eliot created new and unique poetry in arguing that 'the most powerful effect is produced by the sudden contrasts of associations.' These contrasts serve to enhance a oneness within these elements which had gone unnoticed before, such as the connection between a rose and a flame. Eliot firmly believed that it was them modern poets' duty to reconcile thought and feeling, something which had been lost since the time the Metaphysical poets had been active. In doing so, the poet is able to create a disparate

awareness of his views on life through his poetry. In composing poetry about the fragmentation of modern life in fragments, such as in *The Waste Land*, readers are able to see modern life in a more objective way that was not evident to them before. For Eliot, as well as Pound, 'the fragmentary nature of modern poetry was an endeavour both to express and to heal the fragmentation of the modern psyche and modern culture.' The method of such disparate and fragmenting ideas was a way to connect the past to the present, the mundane to the spiritual, and history with the contemporary. Eliot's new and discordant connections aimed to unite modern life and culture since it was only through this unity that salvation could be achieved from the sterility and dryness that Eliot felt encompassed the twentieth century. *The Waste Land* established both a relation to as well as a separation from tradition by intertextuality, pastiche, and parody.

What Eliot found most important in uniting thought and feeling was that this created a wholeness of sensibility, a modern wit, which the modern poet needed in order to be able to form new wholes. Eliot manages to do this also by reaching out and using elements which are not usually considered poetic. In fact, he claimed that,

"the business of the poet was to make poetry out of the unexplored resources of the unpoetical; that the poet in fact, was committed by his profession to turn the unpoetical into poetry." ⁷

In *Four Quartets*, Eliot conceived a work about time and humanity's place within it. In *The Waste Land*, Eliot weaves in his experience of modern life and turned it into an inspiring and timeless poem. As he learned from Laforgue, it was 'the sort of material that I had, the sort of experience that an adolescent had had, [which] could be material for poetry; and that the source of new poetry might be found in what had been regarded as the impossible, the sterile, the intractably unpoetic.' Taking unpoetic subjects and ideas, and weaving them into a new whole only added to Eliot's poetic originality and legacy.

Throughout Eliot's *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets*, there lay a common theme of unity. The

reference to the Upanishads is meant to symbolize a new beginning – that to be rid of the dry waste land, we must go back to the very start of it all. Thus, Eliot harks back to Sanskrit to get this message across, the first Indo-European language with which many cultures share words and meanings. *Four Quartets* is also about 'that which returns, which keeps coming back, and its theology, its imagining of human maturation, is rooted in journeys of re-visitation, in returns to where we started from.' Both poems are filled with contrasting images containing many voices, however, they both seem to be concluding at a very similar and fundamental point. The image of the fire and the rose becoming one, and the voice of the Upanishads usher in a new beginning and a new hope for a better future. His poetic originality lay in how he manages to bridge such polar opposites together effortlessly – making his connections seem as if they have always existed in plain sight.

In many of his poems, T.S. Eliot connects fragmented elements in order to create an entirely new concept in the reader's mind. The disparate images were intended to paint a portrait of lost ideals and dependency between individuals in the twentieth century. In bringing together disparate and unlikely links, Eliot created a sense of unity which connected the past to the present. This avant-garde aspect in Eliot's poems laid a new path in the way people wrote and read poetry, and it sanctified Eliot's place as a true Modernist poet.

IV. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF "THE WASTE LAND" INTRODUCTION

The Waste Land is written by literary genius T.S. Eliot. The title metaphorically represents degradation of humanity, broken physically and spiritually perhaps. It is divided into five sections which is disjointed. It contains 434 lines in which Eliot has done counting mistake which is often cited as 433 lines dedicated to famous poet of modernism "Ezra Pound" said *miglior fabbro* (the better craftsman). This poem explores disillusionment and fragmentation influenced by Hindu manuscript.

1. The Burial of the Dead

2. Game of Chess

3. The Fire Sermon 4. Death by Water
5. What the Thunder Said

The Waste Land is the flagship poem composed with a hard toil by the poet of tradition, T.S Eliot. The poem was published in 1922. The Waste Land is considered to be one of the forceful poems of the twentieth century. The poem basically features the decline of the West in its tradition and its way of living. The poet shows his deep concerns that the people are losing what they struggled for centuries in the form of World Wars. The poem warns as thus, "I will show you fear in a handful of dust"

The Waste Land does not contain one particular situation. Rather it is a mixture of five different situations mixed up together strategically. The first one on the list is The Burial of the Dead. The poem begins on the note that Spring season is not a good time of the year. Then the poem suddenly travels into a memory of the childhood in which the narrator remembers a woman known as Marie. Then the poetic narration shifts towards a fortune-teller whose name is Madame Sosostris.

Then continuous the section of A Game of Chess in which a room is seen, well decorated and a picture of the change of Philomel, a lady from Greek Mythology who was raped by the King Tereus and then she was changed into a nightingale. This section ends on two women, trying to get more drinks in the most common bar language.

The third section, The Fire Sermon opens upon a person standing beside the River Thames. He shows his concern that the world has lost its magic. Then we see the reference to Tiresias, a blind prophet who was turned into a woman by the goddess Hera for a period of seven years. Then Zeus gave him the ability to see the future of the world at the cost of his eyesight. He or she, tells us a scene of loveless love-making between a person and a woman. In the fourth section, Death by Water, we see a sailor whose name is Phlebas, sinking deep in the ocean.

The final section, What did the Thunder Said is the crux of the poem. In which Eliot shows his solution to the current problems of the world. This section

begins on a land with no water. The two people are unwave of their presence as a person tries to see the other, the other person vanishes from the sight of the particular person. Then we hear the crackle of thunder suggesting three words from the Hindu mythology,

"Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata Shanti, Shanti, Shanti" which mean "give", "sympathize", and "control" respectively. Then the poem ends on the word "Shantih" three times.

Themes

The Wasteland is, undoubtedly, a grand poem, featuring grand themes under its disposal. One of the prominent themes is the broken and isolated culture of the modern times. The world, especially the Western society was shaken up considerably after the horrors of World War First. The blaze of horror had swept their creative as well as socializing capabilities.

Isolation became a norm because everyone was afraid of everyone. The poem hints at the very thing in its first section when a bunch of robot-like people roam about without having a conscious relationship with their surroundings and the people around them.

The second prominent theme of this poem is death and rebirth. The poem is manifested in death. We see common examples of the corps of the people as the leftovers of many unfortunate events. The poem directly suggests that death is the ultimate fate of everything. But one thing to note here is that after the deadly season of winter comes spring, death results in a new birth with new ideas, perspectives as well as innovations. A common example inside the poem, suggesting the very theme is the fortune-teller, Madame Sosostris who issues a warning of the death by water. Another point to note here is that all the life on earth started in the form of tiny mutations inside the water billion years ago. Thereby, death by water can give rise to new mutations and thus, new species.

The third theme present in the poem is religious spirituality and nihilism. Eliot has added allusions to many cultures, from past and present. As for the religion, the poem focuses on three religions those are, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism. While nihilism rejects the religious ideas and considers this

world a meaningless heap of a "Waste Land". Although Eliot considers religious spirituality another reason of isolation in the modern world, but he finds the solution to modern isolation in religious spirituality as well. In the last section of the poem, Eliot explicitly considers giving up bad thoughts, sympathizing with the rest of the living beings and control over negative emotions, as the means of the redemption of the befallen society.

Figurative Analysis

This is a large poem. Therefore, it contains a great number of figurative devices waiting to be discovered and traced. Eliot has used similes to compare two objects. For instance, we see a comparison between the chair and a throne as well as waiting of a human engine like a taxi waiting for someone to get on board. There are plenty of metaphors linked to other things inside the poem. The cruelty of April is a metaphor of the season of cruelty. The creeping rat is a metaphor of war and its disastrous aftermaths. The poem also boasts the use of personification through giving the human quality of the whining sound of a person to a musical note made by a mandolin. But the poem features irony when it declares the month of April, a cruel month.

In reality, it is a pleasant month bringing about the soothing summer season. But, the poet calls it cruel because it brings back the cruel memories of the war.

Setting and Imagery

The setting of the Waste Land varies from section to section, scene to scene. For instance, in section 1, the setting abruptly changes from dead trees into a room in which a fortune teller is sitting. The images used in this poem are wordly visible. The images may include like, "pulling a long face", "The river's tent is broken", "fishing in the dull canal", and "sound of horns and motors".

Structural Analysis

The poem is composed of 434 lines. It is divided into five sections which are devoid of proper stanza division. T S Eliot knowingly selected this unpatterned pattern to showcase the scattered but dismal atmosphere of his Waste Land. There are no

proper rhyme schemes and rhythmic patterns, thus making this poem a perfect blank verse.

The Waste Land as a Metaphor

Impact on Society

Modernism was a social and artistic movement that influenced the western society during the years surrounding World War I. According to the overview of the modernist movement in Encyclopedia Britannica Online, a break from the previous era and a focus on experimentation characterize the period. Europeans and other western societies found themselves disillusioned and confused after World War I, when the Victorian values of industrialization, social progress, and scientific advancement seemed to falter. The effects of the war had "undermined humankind's faith in the foundations of Western society and culture, and postwar modernist literature reflected a sense of disillusionment and fragmentation" (n. pag.). Thus, rejecting the previously accepted notions of order and security, the philosophers and writers during the modern era attempted to formulate a new perspective of and a solution to the disillusionment caused by World War I.

More specifically in art and culture, artists "responded by trying to find new ways of seeing, new models of knowing . . . abandoning rules of perspective, and in literature, abandoning a fixed point of view". The modern period and the modernist movement had significant and lasting effects on culture, art, literature, and philosophy of the society.

Eliot, as a witness of the social turmoil and transformation surrounding the First World War, was heavily influenced by the modernist movement, and his works became the greatest expression of the perspective of the modern mind. According to Jewel Spears Brooker's description of Eliot's style, his poems are "strikingly modern, avant-garde, [and] fragmented". Most of his early poems, such as Four Quartets, The Hollow Men, and Gerontion, express the despondency and the confusion of the postwar era.

The Waste Land, Eliot's most renowned poem, depicts this "search for redemption and renewal in a sterile and spiritually empty landscape". Because of its complex structure and obscure allusions, the poem is criticized for its confusing and esoteric qualities. However, its uniquely disjointed and incomprehensible content and form make the poem the best depiction of the condition of the modern society.

Post-War Europe: The Real Waste Land

The most important aspect of the poem that illumines its meaning and significance in spite of its obscurity and ambiguity is its metaphorical nature. Jean-Michel Rabate argues that "The Waste Land is fundamentally a poem about Europe". The connection between the poem and the historical context of the modern era reveals that the poem metaphorically illustrates the actual condition of modern Europe; the barren and lifeless waste land is a metaphor of Europe after World War I. Eliot uses this "dialectic of analogies" to metaphorically depict the condition of postwar European society, demonstrating the "disillusionment of a generation". Understanding this metaphorical nature of the poem is essential in studying the poem, in all of its confusing and chaotic elements, within its proper context.

Harold Bloom, among many other critics who share the same opinion about the poem, argues that The Waste Land can be read as a "testament to the disillusionment of a generation, an exposition on the manifest despair and spiritual bankruptcy of the years after World War I"—a dead land of spiritual famine and drought. In his interpretation of the poem, Andrew Ross describes The Waste Land as a metaphor expressing the "cultural infirmity of Europe after the Great War . . . [as] a sign of [the] post-War times". This argument for the metaphorical nature of the poem is valid; the text repeatedly refers to the decay of western civilization after World War I. The speaker observes the "Unreal City," London, after the War—"under the brown fog of a winter dawn / A crowd [flowing] over London Bridge". He is disillusioned and confused at the scene; he "had not thought death had undone so many".

This surreal and foggy image of London—its streets filled with "sighs, short and infrequent," and "each man fixed his eyes before his feet"—accurately and poignantly demonstrates the despair and grim reality of modern Europe. Rather than discussing the condition of modern Europe in factual terms, Eliot uses the poetic, the allusive, and the obscure to depict an image of the physical desolation of the war-torn society and also communicate a sense of spiritual disillusionment and despair. According to Eric Svarny, the dry, barren, lifeless images in the poem and the undeniable sense of futility form an "evocation of post-war London". Svarny notes that the image of London in the poem is characterized by "guilt, shock, [and] incomprehension of traumatized society manifested . . . through historical, cultural, psychic dislocations".

For example, In the first section "The Burial of the Dead," the speaker observes and describes London after the Great War as a broken, dry, and lifeless place full of dead bodies. London, a city once characterized by progress and abundance, has become nothing more than an "Unreal City"; it has lost its cultural and social vitality and has been reduced to a heap of fragments. Svarny further describes

this era for European society as a time during which "all idea of progress or development is reversed after World War I". During the Modern age, including the Victorian era, people believed in the idea of progress and prosperity.

Studying The Waste Land in light of its specific historical context demonstrates how the poem reflects the social conditions of the era and the qualities of high modernist literature. Kristian Smidt's thematic analysis of the poem's commentary on modern Europe thoroughly explains the correlation between the poem and the society surrounding the poem. As a modernist poem, The Waste Land turns away from the norm and tradition both in its ideas and style. Just as the modern man has found it "impossible to hold beliefs of bygone days", Eliot reflects this modernist perspective in his experimental and unique style, defying ordinary and traditional form, aesthetics, logic, and thought. This

is largely an attempt to find "new order through contemplation and exhibition of disorder".

The disjointedness that initially does not make sense in the poem is not a result of Eliot's failed attempt to communicate meaning in an unconventional manner, but it is a rather an artful yet realistic expression of the modern age's attempt to construct a different paradigm and a solution that will explain reality and restore the sense of security of the past that has been lost after the War. The Waste Land, furthermore, is not only a reflection on European society but also "a comment on the universe". The modern man's beliefs are not only a description of the post-war society but also an expression of the modernist worldview and attitude toward reality. Smidt uses dramatic terms to describe the tone of the poem; the modern man "expresses disgust with modern civilization and post-war society".

The speaker's listless attitude in contrast to his eager search for meaning in the waste land communicates a sense of tiredness, demonstrating that although the modern man wants redemption, he does not genuinely hope to find satisfaction and relief from the society he lives in. This attitude explains why the speaker continually alludes to other cultures and texts; the abundant references to the past and exotic phrases in the poem reflect the modern man's resistance to the contemporary and the increasing tendency to look to other societies and time periods. In commenting on the condition of Europe, Eliot demonstrates that he is primarily interested in and concerned with the society around him. Brooker examines The Waste Land as a metaphorical poem that creates "a portrait of the mind of Europe" Brooker analyzes the poem with a psychological approach in understanding the modernist mindset.

Eliot creates a connection between the mind of the poet and the mind of the society; what he communicates through the modern individual's perspective in the poem reflects how he perceives the condition of European society as a whole. According to Eliot's depiction in the poem, the mind of modern Europe can be characterized by distress, agony, and restlessness. Eliot's view of the relationship between the poet and the society reveals his consciousness of the state of his country.

He believed that the "poet should never forget the mind of Europe—the mind of his own country—a mind which he learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind". Various references to Europe and England reflect this deep contemplation of the condition of Europe.

For example, Madame Sosostris, to whom the speaker refers to in "The Burial of the Dead," is described as the "wisest woman in Europe". The poem also mentions various places in England, such as the Thames River, Queen Victoria Street, and Lower Thames Street. The recurrent references to Europe demonstrate that Eliot is chiefly discussing the condition of his country and western society. Thus, in The Waste Land, confusion about the chaos within the society and concern for the nation in such a state coexist and form a story of a broken society ravaged by war told and lamented by a poet who is deeply concerned for his country in the midst of his personal confusion and disillusionment.

Although he laments the hopelessness and despair in modern Europe, Eliot does not leave his commentary on European society as a criticism or lamentation but instead attempts to provide, or suggest, a solution for the predicament of Europe. He equated the condition of Europe to

"schizophrenia". The lack of coherence and logical pattern characteristic of such mental state is reflected in the image of "crowds of people, walking round in a ring" in the midst of the "heap of broken images". This portrayal suggests a sense of not only intellectual absurdity but also circularity;

the mindset of the people lack coherence and a sense of progress. European philosophy and worldview during the modern era was something that had been developing over several centuries. Brooker notes that the incoherence and dichotomy within the mind of Europe began in the seventeenth century.

Fragmentation

The single most prominent aspect of both the form and content of The Waste Land is fragmentation. The Waste Land does not progress in a linear direction as most other poems do. There is no evident subject or element that flows throughout and gives unity to the poem. The only binding force of the seemingly unrelated and chaotic lines is the very notion of

fragmentation itself; disorder and incoherence flow throughout the entire poem. This pattern is easily observable in every part of the poem. Not only is the poem composed of four contrasting sections but it also consists of elements that repeatedly disturb its flow and unity. An example of this disturbance is the unintelligible phrases or expressions that are scattered throughout the work.

In "The Fire Sermon," incomplete and choppy phrases are followed by an obscure expression: "Weialala leia / Wallala leialala". Clare R. Kinney also gives an example of deliberate fragmentation in the poem demonstrated in the structure of "The Fire Sermon." The stanza that begins in line 300 says, "On Margate Sands. / I can connect / Nothing with nothing. / The broken fingernails of dirty hands. / My people humble people who expect / Nothing." Kinney suggests that "this can be rewritten as follows: On Margate Sands / I can connect nothing with nothing. / The broken fingernails of dirty hands. / My people humble people who expect nothing". The alternative that Kinney posits demonstrates that instead of writing in a unified and coherent style, Eliot intentionally creates line breaks to emphasize the speaker's disjointed and incoherent state of mind.

The fragmented nature of The Waste land is not merely a stylistic element or an effect that a reader perceives from the poem but most importantly a principal concept of modernism. Eliot himself shows that this is a significant concept in the poem; the speaker's recurring implying or mentioning the idea proves that fragmentation is an essential aspect of the picture of modernity that is presented in the poem. In the first part, "The Burial of the Dead," the speaker describes the scene that he sees as "a heap of broken images".

V. CONCLUSION

The Waste Land paints a picture of a world that feels broken, empty, and spiritually lost. It's like a landscape after a big disaster, where things are dry, barren, and not growing. Eliot uses many different voices and stories, jumping between time periods and cultures, to show how this feeling of emptiness isn't just happening now, but has roots in the past.

The poem talks about themes like the decay of society, the loss of meaning and connection between people, and the struggle to find hope in a world that seems to have lost its way. Think about how modern life can sometimes feel disconnected and confusing, with old traditions and beliefs not holding the same power anymore. Eliot explores this feeling through vivid images of a dying land, fragmented relationships, and a sense of cultural breakdown.

Throughout the poem, there are hints and longings for renewal and redemption. Even in the dryness, there are whispers of rain and the possibility of life returning. The final section brings in ideas from different religious and philosophical traditions, suggesting that perhaps through acceptance, giving, and having compassion, there might be a path towards healing and finding meaning again.

Ultimately, The Waste Land isn't a simple poem with easy answers. It's more like a powerful and complex reflection on the challenges of the modern world and the search for something to believe in when everything seems to be falling apart. It leaves us with a sense of the difficulty of finding hope, but also with the lingering possibility that renewal, though hard-won, might still be possible.

In the final section of The Waste Land, titled "What the Thunder Said," after a long journey through despair, fragmentation, and the breakdown of civilization, the poem shifts towards a glimmer of possibility. The thunder speaks, and from its booming pronouncements, three key instructions emerge: "Datta," "Dayadhvam," and "Damyata." These are Sanskrit words taken from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, an ancient Indian philosophical text. Eliot, drawing upon this wisdom from the East, presents these concepts as potential remedies for the spiritual and cultural wasteland he has depicted throughout the poem.

Let's start with "Datta." In simple terms, "Datta" means "Give." But this isn't just about giving material possessions. In the context of the Upanishad and Eliot's poem, it carries a much deeper significance. It implies a selfless act of offering, a willingness to relinquish something of oneself for the benefit of

others or for a higher purpose. Think about the relationships and interactions portrayed earlier in *The Waste Land*. They are often characterized by selfishness, exploitation, and a lack of genuine connection. Characters use each other, betray each other, and are consumed by their own desires and anxieties. The act of "giving" stands in stark contrast to this self-centeredness. It suggests a move away from the isolating and destructive tendencies that have led to the wasteland.

"Giving" in this sense can involve many things. It can be the giving of love, compassion, and understanding. It can be the giving of one's time, energy, and resources to help others. It can also mean giving up one's ego, one's pride, and one's need to always be in control. In a world obsessed with acquisition and personal gain, "Datta" calls for a radical shift in perspective, urging individuals to prioritize the needs of others and to find fulfillment in selfless acts.

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