

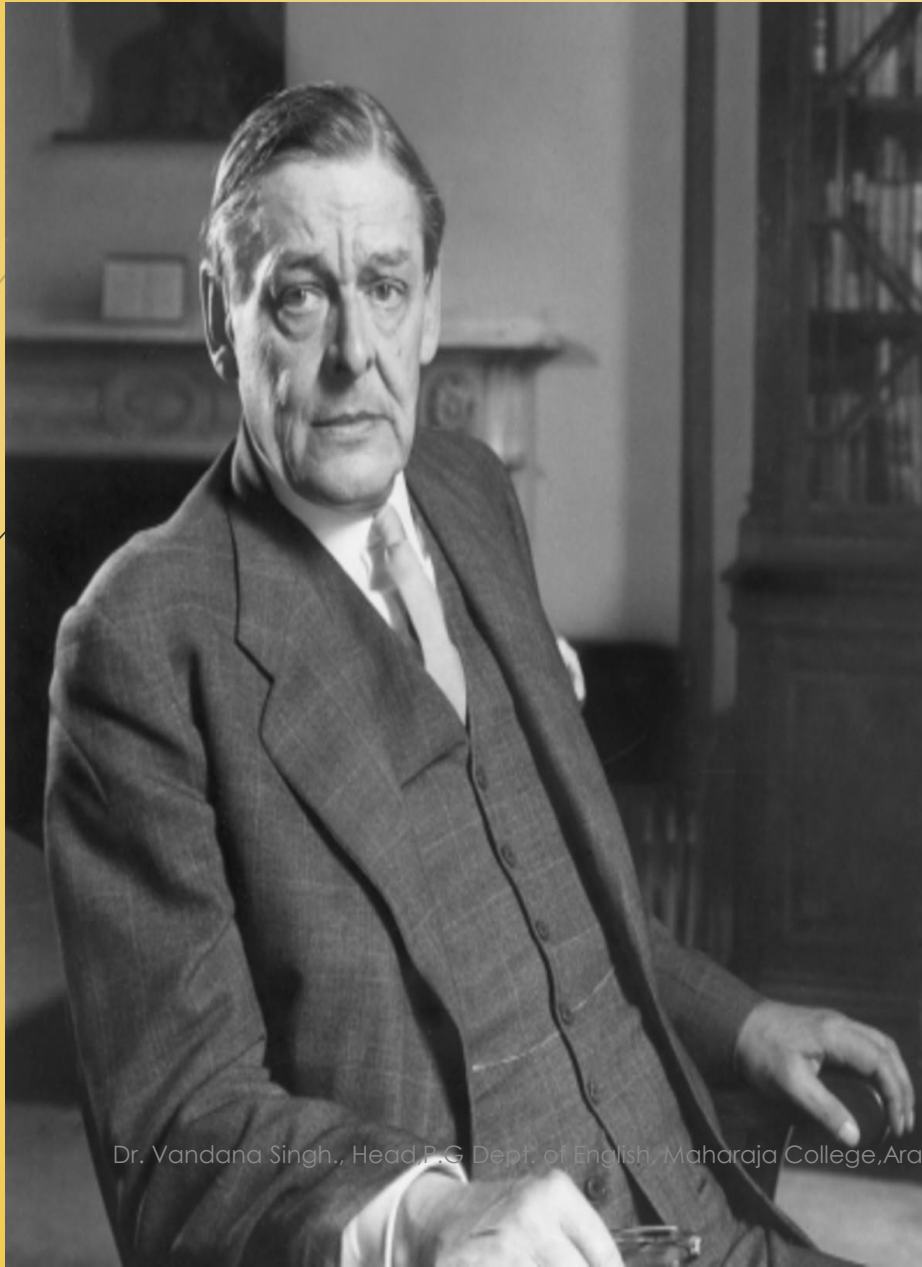
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UNIT-II

# CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF WASTELAND T.S ELIOT

DR. VANDANA SINGH  
HEAD,  
P.G DEPT. OF ENGLISH  
MAHARAJA COLLEGE, ARA

# T.S ELIOT AND HIS WORK

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PENGUIN CLASSICS

T. S. ELIOT

*The Waste Land  
and Other Poems*

Edited with an Introduction and Notes by FRANK KERMODE

# THE WASTELAND

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## THE WASTE LAND

### I. THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

**A**PRIL is the cruellest month, breeding  
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing  
Memory and desire, stirring  
Dull roots with spring rain.  
Winter kept us warm, covering  
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding  
A little life with dried tubers.  
Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee,  
With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,  
And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,  
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.  
Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.  
And when we were children, staying at the archduke's,  
My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,  
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,  
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.

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# Unity and Technique

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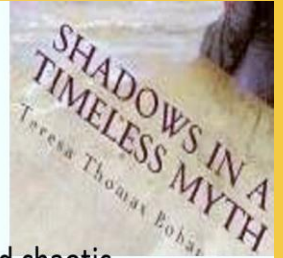
## Unity of the Poem

- **Tiresias:** “. . . *though blind, throbbing between two lives, Old man with wrinkled female breasts*”
- He is the thread of the rosary who knots various beads together – gives unifying effect seemingly disjointed mumbo-jumbo ‘The Waste Land’.



## Unity of the Poem

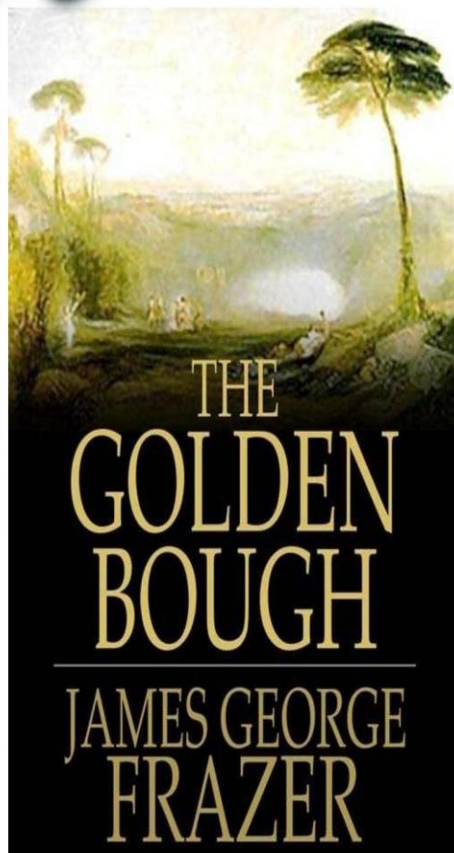
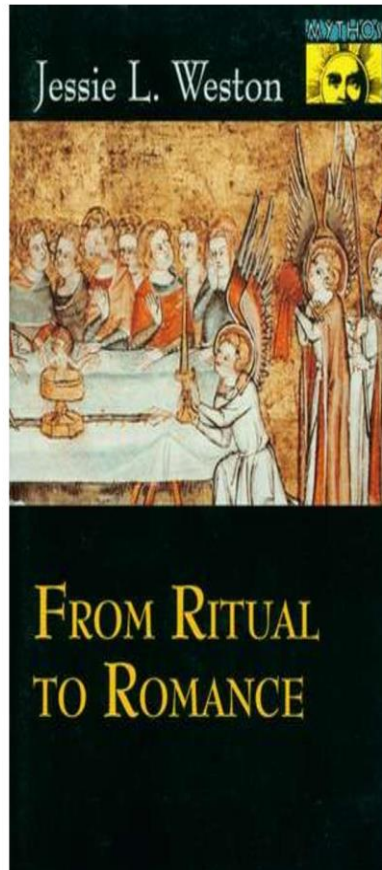
- **Mythical Technique:**
  - It provides a pattern, a way of controlling and ordering and giving shape to what is shapeless and chaotic
  - It provides a norm for measuring the extent of degeneracy in contemporary Europe.
  - It shows that the present spiritual predicament is an ever-recurring phenomena and so a universal significance is imparted to it
  - It emphasises the wide gulf which separated the present godless humanity for the early human society when spiritual values were intact.
  - It helps poet to put together the time and space – compress whole ages within a short span and poem gains comprehensiveness. Thus, what requires 12 cantos to say, is effectively said in 5 small parts of poem.
- Myths form the part of collective consciousness. It helps poet in communicating his meaning with minimal explanation.



# THE POEM

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## BOOKS THAT INSPIRED WASTELAND



### ➤ From Chaos to Harmony

- The poem is very difficult to read because its content and form mirror the apparent anarchy and meaninglessness of life.
- Filled with cryptic, chaotic networks of references, including the incongruent voices of ancient prophets and modern poets as well as obscure historical allusions, the poem is an attempt to provide mankind with the way back to the Garden—the place of unity, of non-duality between male and female, good and evil, and God and man.
- It is the reader's task to decipher this incomprehensible, puzzle-like poem by reflecting on the connections that exist between all of these jumbled, obscure references.
- The reader can only discover these connections—unscramble “the code”—by transcending the temporal (the here and now) and embracing the spiritual (the eternal).
- This poem is meant to provide optimism and transform human consciousness by presenting a series of enduring spiritual truths whose aim is to encourage the flowering of our humanity through the letting go of the ego.

# EXPLANATION

- The Wasteland was published in 1922; it is a remarkable poem in the history of English Literature, written in 433 lines.
- **The poem consists of five section:**
- 1. **"The Burial of the Dead"**, this section deals with spiritual decadence and death of waste-landers.
- 2. **"A Game of Chess"**, the game is played to hide the seduction of a young girl by a noble man.
- 3. **"The Fire Sermon"**, a reference to Buddha's famous sermon, which suggests that the whole world is on fire of hatred, lamentation, misery, grief and despair.
- 4. **"Death by Water"**, water is a symbol of life but for waste-landers it's a symbol of death,
- 5. **"What the Thunder Said"**, here we find solution to get rid of barrenness and sterility of waste-landers or modern man.

# OBJECTIVE CORRELATION-THE SYMBOLIC STRUCTURE

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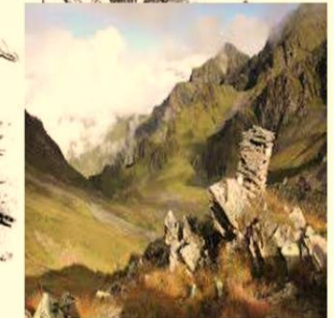
## A Poem in Five Parts

- The Burial of the Dead
- A Game of Chess
- The Fire Sermon
- Death by Water
- What the Thunder Said



## A poem made of Collage of Images

- Apart from these titular images, the poem is nothing but collage of seemingly distinct images.



# THE SIGNIFICANCE

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## A Burial of the Dead



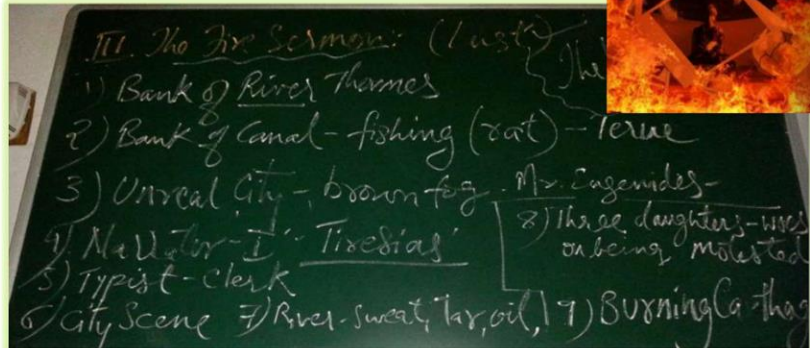
- Landscape scene: April, Winter, Spring shower...
- Marie in the mountains after coffee
- Landscape scene: deserted place, rocks, no water, fear in handful of dust, heap of broken images
- Hyacinth girl
- Madam Sosostriis – tarot cards, hanged man, drowned sailor
- Unreal city; London bridge, death undone somany, Stetson, buried corpse, Dog.

## A Game of Chess



- Xylograph in Lady's chamber
- Carvings of Nightingale – Myth of Philomela – barbarous king Terues
- Dialogue / monologue between two person without identity – You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember Nothing? . . . Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?"
- Scene in coffee-shop: Lil, her husband Albert.  
"And we shall play a game of chess,  
Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door"

## The Fire Sermon



- To Carthage then I came
- Burning burning burning burning  
O Lord Thou pluckest me out  
O Lord Thou pluckest

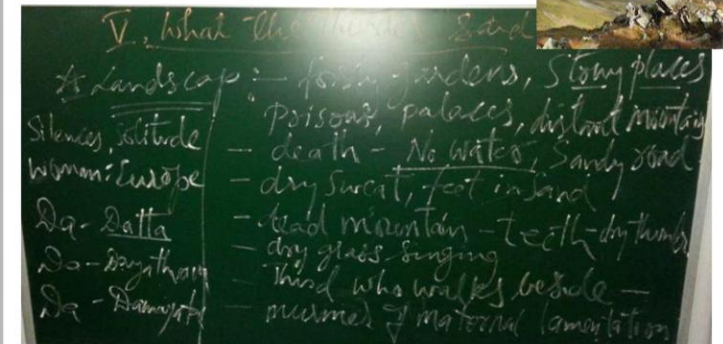
Dr. Vandana Singh., Head, P.G Dept. of English, Maharaja College, Ara

## Death by Water



- Phlebas the Phoenician
- A current under sea  
Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell  
He passed the stages of his age and youth  
Entering the whirlpool.
- Gentle or Jew  
O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,  
Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and  
tall as you.

## What the Thunder Said



"Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.  
Shantih shantih shantih"

- The Peace that passeth all understanding

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# T.S ELIOT'S -OBJECTIVE CORRELATIVE

- ▶ The experience that conveys the message:
- ▶ **The Waste Land as the Objective Correlative**
- ▶ The waste land is the situation that signifies human despair and fear of death “. . . A sociological stagnation of inauthentic lives and living that has settled upon us, and that evokes nothing of our spiritual life, our potentialities, or even our physical courage—until, of course, it gets us into one of its inhuman wars.” (Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth*)
- ▶ **Objective Correlative: The Symbolic Structure**
- ▶ \_“The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding the ‘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.”

# ANALYSIS OF THE MODERN AGE

- Modern man is spiritually hollow and barren; he is just like a robot that follows the pre-assigned tasks. He wakes up early in the morning, changes his dress, takes his breakfast, goes to office, takes his lunch, returns to his home, spends time with family, takes dinner, goes to his bed and next day in the morning again follows the same routine.
- Modern man is inhabitant of Wasteland, although he has gained progress in science and materialistic culture, yet he has no values, he is spiritually dead. He has only one eye of Commerce his spiritual eye is closed, so he is spiritually blind.
- Few of the reasons for modern man's destruction are sex perversities and gambling, making false love and religious waywardness. He is confined to his routine work and helpless to act upon his religious doctrines or moral values.
- Religion is the only way to get deliverance, man is mortal he can be immortal just like the Holy Christ by adopting the message of God. The poem "The Wasteland" digs the graves of ancients and shows us their immoral activities, waywardness and spiritual barrenness and this is the great craftsmanship of the poet. Through the symbolic and allusive analysis of this poem the researcher will try to show the images of hollowness and barrenness in the present age.

# THE MYTH-THE WASTELAND AS MODERN POEM

## ➤ The Journey: The Mythic Initiation

### ➤ Hell

- Is associated with the impulse to search, discover, and seek change for the sake of self-knowledge and of sharing the experience with others
- Implies the awareness of human duality—mortal and immortal, death and life, good and evil, male and female—and the struggle to integrate these antagonistic elements into a new whole: an authentic identity
- Suggests an inward return to the divine source of life for the sake of living in harmony with the self as well as with nature and society
- Affirms that heaven and hell are within us and that we need to find a way of life which will permit us to experience the divine, spiritual presence

## ➤ The Place to be traversed

- Refers to the manifestation of a chaotic, meaningless place within as well as outside of the self
- A barren land, London, that can only be made fertile again through a ritual sacrifice
- A place within the self that can be humanized through patience, self-denial, and compassion
- Convey the state of post-war civilization and the soul through “the heap of broken images”
- Transcend the ego by identifying with the continuity of significant tradition, of the inherited wisdom of the human race
- Escape chronological time to experience the truth of eternity

# FORM OF THE POEM

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## ► The form

- Syncopated rhythms of modern life • Multiple meanings suggest transformation: from fragmentation to re-integration • Organizational networks

## ► Fragmentation and Re-integration

- A collection of fragments connected through a network of echoes, contrasts, parallels, and allusions • Each fragment presented as incomplete until perceived in the context of the whole poem • Fragments then coalesce into a new unity more meaningful than the former “broken image”

## ► Method of Fragmentation and Re-integration: Cubism

- Time reconstituted in much the same way as cubism reconstitutes space—a jumble of multiple layers on top of an occluded background presence: the history of mankind
- Characters and situations seen from multiple points of view

## ► Method of Fragmentation and Re-integration: Collage

- The past and present; the mythic and the real; high and popular culture; many different languages • The real and the imagined co-exist in the poem erasing the boundaries between them • The real and the imagined support one another • The real creating a sense of authenticity • The imagined control the significance of the real by interpreting them

## ► Method of Fragmentation and Re-integration: Surrealism

- Grotesque images remembered from a dream • Elusive • Eerie • Enigmatic • Images welded together of unrelated, contradictory elements • Banal modern life/significant traditions • Double image • Every episode, character, and symbol transformed under pressure of its context into something else • Achieved through ambiguous symbols, allusions, the exploitation of physical resemblances, and quotations to fit new applications

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# PROTAGONIST AND THE PURPOSE

## ► **The Hero: The Protagonist/Tiresias**

- Protagonist shares with the readers his psychological experiences and insights:
- A participator as well as a spectator
- A commentator on the past, present, and future
- A synthesis of all the characters that appear in the poem—Marie, the Fisher King, Madame Sosostris, the hyacinth girl, the young man carbuncular, Ferdinand—  
at once the wounded god, the sage woman, as well as the quester, the initiate, and the resurrected god
- Purveys truths and how to live life in an authentic manner
- Suggests that we need to detach ourselves from our egos
- Affirms that once you die to your flesh, you are born to your spirit
- Implies that true reality is based on your identity and unity with all life
- Teaches us how to penetrate through the labyrinth of life so that spiritual values come through

## ► **The Reader**

- Is invited to participate in this panoramic journey through the waste land
- Is limited by a single perspective at any given moment, therefore constantly feeling lost
- Perceives the poem and life not as a whole but as a series of constantly shifting series of patterns and perspectives
- Reality appears to be fragmented and disordered
- Is challenged to unify all of the appearing and disappearing images into a new transcendent whole

## ► **Purpose of the Wasteland**

- To convey the soul's and civilization's sense of emptiness, confusion, and aimlessness after World War I
- To provide a means of regeneration for the soul and civilization • To revitalize poetry

# Allusions and Symbols

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- ▶ Thomas Stearne Eliot stands as a great poet of the twentieth century. He is regarded as a rebel poet, who discusses city life, its barrenness, hectic activities, sex perversities, immoral attitude of the city people, and loss of faith in religious traditions, spiritual sterility, and snobbery and so on. It is said that, a great poet in writing of him, writes his age, we find the same quality in the poetry of Thomas Stearne Eliot.
- ▶ He uses both traditional as well as personal symbols in his poetry. He is an obscure symbolist; an ordinary reader can never easily understand his symbols. As for as allusions in his poetry are concerned, he uses Shakespearean and Miltonic as well as Dante's and Lord Buddha's references in his art. He also uses some particular Christian myths and at the same time he introduces us Greek mythology.

# Critical Analysis of Allusions and Symbols

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- There are four waste lands in the literary history.
  - The **First Waste Land** is of King Oedipus of Thebes, which show Oedipus complex i.e. sexual intercourse between mother and son.
  - The **Second Waste Land** is of King Fisher, who became impotent (lacking sexual power) due to some immoral activity.
  - The **third Waste Land** is the Biblical Waste Land; it is concerned with the sufferings of people who worshipped idols.
  - **The fourth or modern Waste Land** is written by T. S. Eliot which signifies the sins and fire of lust in modern society.
  - At the end of every waste land we find a solution and penance of rebirth or regeneration.
  - Similarly, the modern waste land by T. S. Eliot also ends in the ray of hope; here T. S. Eliot gives us a message that the three "**DA's**"- Datta, Dayadhvam and Damyata are the solutions to save the modern civilization from chaos and ruin.
- Eliot's allusive and symbolic technique is far reaching.
- He uses more allusions and symbols than that of John Milton.
- He wants to relate the present to the past, in order to convey some didactic purpose from the past incidents.
- Through these allusions and symbols he forecasts the future of modern man and modern civilization.
- Modern man can attain deliverance by acting upon the message of Thunder i.e. give, sympathize and control. He quotes the references of more than thirty writers.
- Mostly he takes those allusions from the past which symbolize spiritual hollowness, degeneration in free sex and sterility.

# THE 3 DA'S

## ► The Coming of the Rain:Datta—Give:

### ► Thunder's question #1:

What have we given? • Protagonist answers: Man cannot live locked in the self; life calls for surrender. • The giving has been a surrender to passion rather than to love • Living calls for belief in something more than life.

## ► The Coming of the Rain: Dayadhvam—Sympathize :

• Surrendering to something outside “the prison of the self” is an attempt to transcend isolation. • The door of the prison of the self is locked by pride. • Passage echoes many of the symbols and references that have previously appeared in the poem. • The key takes us back to “The Game of Chess” and the wealthy woman who feels alone.

## ► The Coming of the Rain:Damyata—Control ;

• Control follows sympathy. • Control can be learned and used successfully, as the example of the boat responding to the expert hand. • Passage ends with the emphasis of the failure to exercise the same kind of control in a human relationship. • It suggests that following a coherent plan for dealing with the complexity of human relationships is not adequate. • A person cannot be controlled like a boat.



# From Chaos to Harmony

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- ▶ What are human beings to do when they are in despair, and religion offers no hope, especially after the senseless deaths caused by World War I and the Spanish flu?
- ▶ Catastrophic events suggest that we are quite alone in a universe in which chaos is the natural order of things.
- ▶ Feeling fragmented and disconnected from the self, society, and nature, human beings believe that life is futile.
- ▶ Eliot's purpose is to rehabilitate a discredited system of beliefs to help us cope with life's contingencies.
- ▶ To accomplish this goal, Eliot takes us on a journey of the soul.
- ▶ But this journey is not a free ride, for Eliot expects the reader to participate in this quest of discovery—an initiation—which will reveal meaning, truth, virtue, and the good life.

However, the poem is very difficult to read because its content and form mirror the apparent anarchy and meaninglessness of life.

- ▶ Filled with cryptic, chaotic networks of references, including the incongruent voices of ancient prophets and modern poets as well as obscure historical allusions, the poem is an attempt to provide mankind with the way back to the Garden—the place of unity, of non-duality between male and female, good and evil, and God and man.

It is the reader's task to decipher this incomprehensible, puzzle-like poem by reflecting on the connections that exist between all of these jumbled, obscure references.

- ▶ The reader can only discover these connections—unscramble “the code”—by transcending the temporal (the here and now) and embracing the spiritual (the eternal).
- ▶ In the end, this poem is meant to provide optimism and transform human consciousness by presenting a series of enduring spiritual truths whose aim is to encourage the flowering of our humanity through the letting go of the ego.

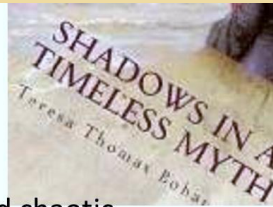
## Central Theme

- “The gist of the poem is apparently a wild revolt from the abomination of desolation which is human life, combined with a belief in salvation by the usual catchwords of renunciation – this salvation being also the esoteric significance of the savage fertility-rituals found in the *Golden Bough*, a watering, as it were, of the desert of the suffering soul.”
- “The Waste Land” – New Statesman 22 (3 Nov 1923)

~ **F.L. Lucas**

## Unity of the Poem

- **Mythical Technique:**
  - It provides a pattern, a way of controlling and ordering and giving shape to what is shapeless and chaotic
  - It provides a norm for measuring the extent of degeneracy in contemporary Europe.
  - It shows that the present spiritual predicament is an ever-recurring phenomena and so a universal significance is imparted to it
  - It emphasises the wide gulf which separated the present godless humanity for the early human society when spiritual values were intact.
  - It helps poet to put together the time and space – compress whole ages within a short span and poem gains comprehensiveness. Thus, what requires 12 cantos to say, is effectively said in 5 small parts of poem.
- Myths form the part of collective consciousness. It helps poet in communicating his meaning with minimal explanation.



## Unity of the Poem: Oneness of Characters

- Aesthetically merging erudition and emotion through a cacophony of diverse and often dissonant voices, 'The Waste Land' serves as a microcosm of the modern state of mind and the state of the world itself.
- The personality and experiences of individuals are fused together, obscuring boundaries to form a richly layered paradigm of the universal psyche...
- The characters are rather symbolic than individual.  
~ **Rebecca Howden**

## Thematic Reading

- Life in Death and Death in Life: “Of hardly less importance to reader, however, is a knowledge of Eliot’s basic method. *The Waste Land* is built on a major contrast – a device which is a favorite of Eliot’s and is to be found in many of his poems, particularly his later poems. The contrast is between two kinds of life and two kinds of death. *Life devoid of meaning is death; sacrifice, even the sacrificial death, may be life-giving, an awakening to life.* The poem occupies itself to a great extent with this paradox, and with a number of variations upon it.
- ~Cleanth Brooks
- *The Waste Land: Critique of the Myth (1939)*



## Thematic Reading

- Western society had exhausted its spiritual and cultural legacy. The socio-cultural malaise that affected Western Society in the 1920’s is very effectively projected by Eliot in his poem *The Waste Land*. In its epic sweep, it captures the near collapse of 2000 years of Western civilization.
- I.A.Richards and Cleanth Brooks agree that this poem is essentially a religious poem – a Christian poem. The Christian material is at the centre, but the poet never deals with it directly.

# STRUCTURE

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## The Structure of the Poem



- The structure is that of spiral up and down. The poem proceeds with deeper and deeper probing into the modern malaise. Throughout the poem we come back to the same point, **but at different levels.**
- **I.A. Richards** 'The Principles of Literary Criticism' (1926) calls it '**Music of Ideas**: Ideas of all kinds, abstract and concrete, general and particular, are arranged like the musician's phrases – not that they may provide information or tell us something – but that their effects in us may combine into a coherent whole of feeling and attitude and produce a peculiar liberation of the will. They are there to be responded to, not to be pondered or worked out'.

## ► Plurality of Points of View

- Who is the speaker protagonist at the beginning of the poem?

If it is the speech of one tormented person, it has the range of many personalities and voices.

- Is Marie's voice spoken, overheard, remembered?
- There are no contextual clues as to identity.
- The poetic voice is constantly changing: we cannot say with certainty where one concludes and another begins.
- No single voice dominates; instead there is a polyphony of voices.
- A character appears, becomes prominent, and then disappears, sometimes merging with another.
- Each character being introduced in the poem represents an aspect of the speaker.
  - What the reader is being asked to do is to discover the connections that link the characters and then combine them to create a new literary reality.
  - "The life of a soul does not consist in the contemplation of one consistent world but in the painful task of unifying jarring and incompatible ones, and passing, when possible, from two or more discordant viewpoints to a higher which shall somehow include and transmute them." (T. S. Eliot)
  - By the end of the poem the many consciousnesses that appear will coalesce into one: Jung's archetypes will become integrated for the transformation of self to take place.

# References

- ▶ Text Link

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47311/the-waste-land>

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