

At School

The boy Eliot was first sent to school at St. Louis day school where he studied till 1905, when he went to Harvard University. At school he was considered a brilliant student, and in 1900 won a gold medal for Latin. He began writing at school and showed a marked technical proficiency and sense of humour. In 1897, his father built a holiday resort at Eastern Point, near Cape Ann, in New England, and here the poet passed his school vacations. It was here that the poet became an expert Yachtsman, and consequently, sailing images are frequent in his works. Near Eastern Point there are three rocks known as The Dry Salvages, and a part of *The Four Quartets* derives its title from them.

At Harvard : Literary Interests

The poet was at Harvard from 1906-10 where he pursued a wide-ranging course of studies in language and literature : the Classics, and German, French and English literatures. Particularly keen was his interest in comparative literature. Two of his teachers, Irving Babbitt and George Santayana, influenced him profoundly, and he owed his sense of tradition largely to them. Round the year 1908, he read Arthur Symon's book *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, and this stimulated his interest in the poetry of the French symbolists, specially Laforgue.

European Tours

Eliot graduated from Harvard in 1910, and prompted by his interest in the French symbolists, went to France and spent a year at the Sorbonne University at Paris, studying widely in many contemporary writers. In 1911, from Paris, Eliot went to Bavaria, Germany, where he came into contact with important German writers and read their works. He returned to Harvard later in the year and studied Philosophy, specially Indian and Sanskrit literature and philosophy. He was by nature shy, 'an introvert' and in order to shake off his shyness he took boxing lessons. In 1913, he was elected the President of the Harvard Philosophical Club. However, the very next year he undertook another trip to Germany to continue his philosophical studies there.

Settles in England : Marriage

With the outbreak of the First World War, Eliot had to leave Germany. He came to England and continued his studies at Oxford till 1915. Financial difficulties compelled him to take up the job of a school teacher. From England he submitted his thesis on the philosophy of Bradley for the doctorate degree, but never returned to Harvard to take that degree. The outbreak of the First World War, his meeting with Ezra Pound in London in 1914, and his introduction through him to the lively literary circles of the

London of the time, and finally his marriage to an English girl, Vivienne Haigh, in July 1915, led to his settling in London, and making it his home. Thus though born an American, Eliot came to be a naturalized citizen to England.

Takes to Journalism : Rise of the Poet

In 1917, Eliot gave up teaching, and entered the foreign department of Lloyds Bank, where he worked till 1925, dealing with "documentary bills, acceptances, and foreign exchange". During all this time he was also writing vigorously, and several times became ill with over-work. In 1918, he registered for the U.S. Navy, but was not taken into service owing to his poor health. He worked as the assistant editor of *The Egoist* from 1917-1919, contributed frequently to *The Athenaeum*, and in 1923, became the editor of *The Criterion* which he continued to edit till the out-break of the Second World War. In 1925, he joined the new publishing firm, *Faber and Faber*, of which he soon became the director, and worked in that capacity till the end of his days. During this time he had also been writing poetry, and his reputation as a poet was constantly growing. The publication of *The Waste Land* (1922) attracted wide interest; its technique was widely imitated, and it influenced even those who were not conscious imitators.

Joins Anglo-Catholic Church : The Christian Note

Eliot became a British citizen in 1927, and also joined the British Church that very year. The event marks an epoch in his poetic career. The poems written after that as *The Journey of the Magi*, *Ash Wednesday* are more religious in tone : they reflect the stage of Eliot's thinking and feeling about the religion he has adopted and are a stage in his intention to communicate his feelings. His reputation continued to grow and he paid a short visit to Harvard, in 1933, to lecture there as a visiting professor. At this time, Eliot was also developing a practical interest in drama, with a view to reaching wider audiences. The results were the great masterpieces of poetic drama—*The Murder in the Cathedral*, *The Family Reunion*, *The Confidential Clerk*, *The Cocktail Party*, etc. His poetry, after 1935, continued to be religious, but not so obviously Christian as that of the earlier period. His last major poetic work is *The Four Quartets*.

Fame and Prosperity

Eliot's success both as a poet and in a worldly sense was remarkable. He visited the U.S.A. several times as a visiting professor, and continued to publish articles and essays upto the very end of his days. World recognition of his genius came with the award of the Order of Merit and the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1948. On the death, in 1947, of his first wife, who had been ailing since 1930, he married his private secretary, Miss Valerie Fletcher, in 1957. This lady was the companion of his last days and nursed him tenderly

4 when he fell ill in 1964. He died on 4th January, 1965, in London, leaving a void in the literary world which may never be filled. He was cremated and his ashes were buried in the little village of *East Coker* in Somerset from where his ancestor, Andrew Eliot, had migrated to America in the seventeenth century.

CHARACTER AND PERSONALITY

Powerful, Complex Personality

✓ Eliot, a great force in modern English literature, had a complex and many-sided personality. He was a classicist and a traditionalist, a great innovator, a critic, a social thinker, a philosopher and mystic, all combined in one. He was born in America, toured through Europe, and accepted British citizenship early in life. His character and personality were thus the resultant of cosmopolitan influences. As T.S. Pearce points out, "He presented himself in a British manner, with umbrella, striped trousers, and bowler hat. He rejected many of the causes which make up the American tradition, the cause of the emigration to America, of the War of Independence, and of the Civil War. He never returned to America except as a visitor. He developed a perfectly standard English accent. He appeared to possess a characteristic English reticence. He liked English cheeses. Nevertheless, none of these things really disguised the fact that he was an American and that in attitude and tradition he fits more easily into the American context than into the British, especially when you remember that to live and work out of America has been characteristic of American writers at all times. He wore his new nationality, and his English characteristics, rather as a mask, covering, though not exactly hiding, a powerful individual largely detached from such matters as nationality."

He was also a European, and that is a title almost as unrevealing as American. The powerful individual, rejecting any label or classification, is revealed in his poetry. It has little in common with either his English or American contemporaries, though it is closer, if anything, to the American writers, especially to Ezra Pound.

Physical Appearance

The most striking impression which memorises of him as a person give is of his appearance. Whatever else his friends recall, nearly everyone which might almost have been a deliberate disguise. Occasionally, there are glimpses of him in a more flamboyant costume, and a hint that there was a touch of the dandy in him, but these are rare. He is recalled as tall, pale, thoughtful, absorbed, speaking in measured and solemn tones even when being humorous or not.

His Sense of Humour

There are anecdotes which reveal a remote and melancholy humour with the potent implications of profundity which made it disarming and slightly weird. One such anecdote is recorded by **Hugh Kenner**:

After *The Confidential Clerk* was produced, a journalist, teased by implications he couldn't pin down, or perhaps simply assigned a term of duty at poet-baiting, wanted to know what it meant. 'It means what it says', said Mr. Eliot patiently. 'No more?' 'Certainly, no more' 'But supposing', the journalist pursued, 'supposing you had meant something else, would you not have put some other meaning more plainly?' 'No', Eliot replied, 'I should have put it just as obscurely.'

The anecdote reveals a humorous attitude towards the situation, a humorous detachment from it, and even from himself as part of it.

Character and Personal Habits

Herbert Read writes of his character as follows: "The man, I knew, in all his reserve, was the man he wished to be: a serious but not necessarily a solemn man, a severe man never lacking in kindness and sympathy, a profound man (profoundly learned, profoundly poetic, profoundly spiritual) and yet to outward appearance a correct man, a conventional man, an infinitely polite man—in brief, a gentleman. He not only was not capable of a mean deed; I would also say that he never had a mean thought. He could mock folly and be severe with sin, and there were people he simply did not wish to know. But his circle of friends, though never very large, was very diverse, and he could relax with great charm in the presence of women. He had moods of gaiety and moods of great depression—I have known occasions when I left him feeling that my spirit had been utterly depleted. Often he was witty (in a somewhat solemn voice); his anecdotes were related with great deliberation. He did not hesitate to discuss policies or personalities, but he condemned idle gossip. In personal habits, he was scrupulously correct and clean, never a Bohemian in thought or appearance; but he had a streak of hypochondria, and was addicted to pills and drugs. He had good reason for taking care of himself, for he easily took a chill and often suffered from a distressing cough. I never saw him indulge in any sport. One week end he spent with me early in our friendship (it was 1927 or 1928) he came clad in a most curious pair of checkered breeches, neither riding-breeches nor 'plus fours', but some hybrid which was certainly not from Savile Row. He made a fetish of umbrellas, as is perhaps well-known. He had them specially made with enormous handles, with the excuse that no one would take such an umbrella from a cloak-room by mistake. He relished good food and beer and wine, but his speciality was cheese of which he had tasted a great many varieties."

The Works of T.S. Eliot

His Versatility

T.S. Eliot's period of active literary production covers over forty-five years. During this long period, he wrote poems, plays, literary and social essays, as well as worked as a journalist and editor. He achieved distinction and wielded considerable influence in each of the fields he worked. His writings may, therefore, be studied under three heads, Poetry, Drama and Prose, the later including his literary and social criticism as well as his journalism.

(A) POETRY

Eliot's career as a poet may conveniently be divided into five phases or periods:

1. **The First Phase :** *Eliot's Juvenilia* 1905-9. Eliot began writing quite early in life while still a school boy at Smith's Academy, St. Louis. The poems of this period are immature, juvenile productions, mere school boy exercises, yet showing signs of poetic talent. The poems were published in the various college and school magazines, as *the Smith Academy Record* and *the Harvard Advocate*.

2. **The Second Phase :** *Prufrock and Other Observations*, 1917. The collection includes poems written during the second phase of Eliot's poetic activity, from 1909 to 1917. The poems were written in Boston, in Europe, and during his first year in England, and show considerable influence of Eliot's reading of French writers, particularly *Laforque*. "They are sophisticated observations of people, of social behaviour, and of urban landscapes." The poetry is of urban streets, and houses and people, not of woods and fields and flowers. Eliot is frankly satirical of Boston society, and the love-theme, when it appears, receives an ironic treatment. The rottenness, the corruption and decadence of contemporary society is exposed with a rare poignancy. The most important poems of this collection are:

1. *The Love-Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*
2. *Portrait of a Lady*
3. *The Preludes*
4. *Rhapsody on a Windy Night*

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HIS WORKS

5. *The "Boston Evening Transcript"*

6. *Mr. Apollinaris*.

The poet has found himself.

3. **The Third Phase (1918-25).** The most significant poems of this phase are:

1. *Gerontion*
2. *Burbank with a Baedekar*
3. *Sweeney Erect*
4. *A Cooking Egg*
5. *Sweeney among the Nightingales*
6. *The Waste Land*, 1922
7. *The Hollow Men*, 1925.

The poems are strictly urban in character. They reveal a deepening of the poet's distress at the corruption and decay of contemporary European civilisation. The range and scope of his poetry is now much enlarged. Uptil now he had dealt with particular people and places, but now he, "writes a poetry which belongs to what is called major or great poetry. It may be called epic poetry—and *The Waste Land* is a kind of compressed epic—for it portrays the state of the civilisation out of which it grows." This is done in a limited way, but still *The Waste Land* stands in the epic tradition. The poems reveal a considerable maturity of the poet's powers. The characteristic style and technique of Eliot are now effectively used. *The Waste Land*, specially is fragmented in effect, lacking in cohesion, thus symbolising the breakdown of beliefs and values in the cultural life of the West.

The poems are bleak in tone, and have often been regarded as entirely pessimistic. Their gloom is the resultant of the poet's inner gloom consequent upon over-work, ill-health, the continued mental-illness of his wife, and the harrowing, nerve-shattering impact of the world war on a sensitive temperament.

We are also introduced to such generic characters in Eliot's poetry as Sweeney, Burbank, etc., who are not individuals but symbolic figures typifying the grossness and decay of contemporary society. Thus Sweeney is animal and unfeeling, who in his younger days might have been a professional pugilist but in his old age keeps a pub.

4. **The Fourth Phase (1925-35).** This is the period of Eliot's *Christian Poetry*. Eliot joined the Anglican Church of England in 1927, and this change in his faith is reflected in the poems of this phase. The poet searches for a right way, a right solution to the human dilemma, and he does so through the traditional material and imagery of Christianity. The tone is

rather optimistic, and there are indications of the solution which the poet is likely to reach. The more characteristic poems of this Christian period are :

1. *Ash Wednesday*, 1930
2. *Journey of the Magi*
3. *Animula*
4. *Marina*
5. *Choruses from "The Rock"*
6. *Coriolanus*
7. *A number of minor and unfinished poems.*

5. **The Fifth Phase (1935-43).** This is the period of the *Four Quartets*, which were published as follows :

1. *Burnt Norton*, 1936
2. *East Coker*, 1940
3. *The Dry Salvages*, 1941
4. *Little Gidding*, 1942.

This is the phase of Eliot's religious poetry as contrasted with the previous Christian poetry. In both the phases Eliot is a religious poet—as he ever was—but in the previous period he used Christian imagery and tradition, while now he examines the eternal problems of men without reference to the Christian tradition. "The poems combine the drab and grim picture of modern society which had been prominent before with an intricate contemplation of the problems of space and time, life and death, past and future" (T.S. Pearce). The poet has cast his looks at the worst, and yet looks at life with faith and hope.

(B) DRAMA

Eliot did much to bring about a revival of English poetic drama, both through his practice and critical pronouncements.

His dramatic production includes :

1. *The Rock, a Pageant Play*, 1934
2. *Murder in the Cathedral*, 1935
3. *The Family Reunion*, 1939
4. *The Cocktail Party*, 1950
5. *The Confidential Clerk*, 1954
6. *The Elder Statesman*, 1959.

As a dramatist, his range is narrower than that of his poetry. He began by writing purely Christian drama. *The Rock* is a pageant written in collaboration with E.M. Browne, and *Murder in the Cathedral*, one of his

most significant plays, deals with the martyrdom of Thomas Becket. The dramatist tries to bring home to his audiences the real meaning and significance of martyrdom. The setting is medieval. The later plays also have a religious theme, but the setting is contemporary and social. By the time of *The Family Reunion*, Eliot felt a need to appeal to larger and larger audiences, and hence his use of the verse-form is not esoteric or subtle, or only for the learned few. These later plays are basically upper-class drawing-room comedies in the tradition of the Comedy of Manners, with a strong melodramatic element. They can be enjoyed as such by the unthinking, while for the more thoughtful there is the religious content—the meaning of martyrdom to the modern world, and the place in it of the saint.

Eliot's plays suffer from a tinge of artificiality which has limited their appeal. They have been written according to a preconceived theory, and represent a reaction against the English dramatic tradition. Successful drama in England, with few exceptions, has never been written to rule; it has always been romantic, while Eliot tried to write according to rules and theories. He might have produced successful plays in the classical style, but they have always seemed artificial to English audiences.

(C) PROSE

Literary Criticism

Eliot stands in the long line of poet-critics beginning with Ben Johnson and including such names as Dryden, Johnson, Coleridge and Matthew Arnold. Such critics know the mysteries of their own art and so can speak with force and conviction.

Eliot's critical pronouncements, first published largely in the form of articles and essays, in numerous periodicals and journals of the day, have now been collected in the following books:

1. *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, 1933
2. *The Idea of a Christian Society*, 1939
3. *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture*, 1948
4. *Selected Essays*, Third Edition, 1951
5. *On Poetry and Poets*, 1957
6. *To Criticise the Critic*, 1965

Tradition and Individual Talent, *Poetry and Drama*, *the Function of Criticism*, *The English Metaphysical Poets*, *The Frontiers of Criticism*, etc., are among his more popular essays in literary criticism.

The value of Eliot's criticism arises from the fact that he speaks with authority and conviction, and his prose style is as precise and memorable as his poetry. He has been largely responsible for the revival of interest in the

Dr. Rag
Jules Laforgue was a franco-Uruguayan poet,
often referred to as a Symbolist poet.
(16 Aug 1860 - 20 Aug 1887) - Impressionism
His poetry has been called 'part-symbolist,
part-impressionist.'

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The Early Eliot : "Prufrock and Other Observations" 1917

1. *The Love-Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*
2. *Rhapsody on a Windy Night*

(A) INTRODUCTORY

The poems of this volume represent Eliot's coming of age. The influence of Laforgue, the French symbolist poet, predominates, and with it is blended the influence of the 17th century Metaphysical poets. The influence of Laforgue is seen in his awareness of the city, in his use of colloquial idiom, but above all in the amalgamation of levity with seriousness to intensify the seriousness. The poet wears an ironic mask. The highly sophisticated, but degenerate, Boston society receives an ironic treatment. The volume is full of characters who are representatives of this society or representative in general of urban society anywhere. Prufrock, the Lady, Aunt Helen, Mr. Apollinax, etc., are more interesting as representatives than as individuals. For the most part, we are either in the city streets or in some haunt, like the salon in *The Love Song*, of the degenerate but fashionable upper class people. We listen to their conversation, or are told what passes within their minds, and in this way know of the frustrations, ennui, and the boredom of life in a big city. The chief interest of the poems lies in "what goes on within the mind, rather than in the exterior events which provoke the mental activity and play of thought and feeling"—(Williamson). The leading characteristics of Eliot's poetry of this period will be well brought out by a brief consideration of *The Love Song* and *The Rhapsody on a Windy Night*.

(B) "THE LOVE-SONG OF J. ALFRED PRUFROCK": INTERPRETATION AND APPRECIATION

A Revolutionary Poem : Its Ironic Title

The Love Song of Alfred Prufrock was published in the 1917 volume of verses and is one of the best known of Eliot's poems. As F.R. Leavis tells us, "'The Love Song' marks a complete break from the 19th century tradition. It is a revolutionary poem, one of the best specimens of T.S. Eliot's style, diction, technique and versification." There is an exploitation of the symbolist and the "stream of consciousness" techniques, as well as of the manner of the Metaphysicals. Its hero is the member of the cultured

society of a modern city which may be London, Boston, or any other. The title is ironic, for it makes the readers expect some love-making, but the protagonist is entirely 'unheroic', a bundle of hesitations and indecisions, a neurotic, one who has not even the courage enough to approach his lady and propose to her, not to mention any love-making or seduction which is obviously beyond him. The poem portrays his hesitancy and indecision as also brings out the triviality, the hypocrisy, the emptiness, etc., of contemporary urban life.

An Interior Monologue

The poem is in the nature of an 'interior monologue'. It probes deep into the sub-conscious of the protagonist, renders his actual thought process, and in this way highlights his neurotic nature and moral cowardice. It opens abruptly in a colloquial style in the manner of Donne, with the protagonist inviting *you* to go out for a walk with him. In a note Eliot explained that this '*you*' is a friend of the male sex. But as both *Elizabeth Drew* and *Williamson* suggest the poem is not a dialogue between two persons, rather it is an internal debate in the mind of Prufrock between two sides of his personality, and it is through this debate that the poet has thrown a flood of light on his spiritual degeneracy.

Metaphysical Conceits : Symbolism

It is the time of evening, which is like a "patient etherised", symbolic of the consciousness of Prufrock. For like an etherised patient, Prufrock is, *conscious but conscious of nothing*. He is helpless and undecided, and has no courage to act. The image is in the manner of Donne in its yoking together of disparate concepts, but it also reminds one of the manner of the 'French symbolists', by its modernity. Throughout the poem there is a fusion of the metaphysical technique with the manner of the French symbolists. The poem is a medley of images, of mixed metaphors, a combination of the grand and prosaic, the material and the spiritual. The next image, that in which streets are compared to insidious arguments, is symbolic of the stalemate in the life of the central figure and of his thought processes. He has to ask some overwhelming question—obviously the proposal to his lady—but he does not want to be questioned about it.

Prufrock, His Indecision and Enervation

Prufrock reaches the salon of a fashionable restaurant—or he has been there all the time and indulging in day-dreaming—and is conscious of the women moving about the room and talking of Michael Angelo, about Renaissance art. Of course, they do know nothing about the art, it is merely a fashion to talk about it. It is dull, very dull, that October evening and the fog is settling everywhere. It is symbolic, says D.E.S. Maxwell, of Prufrock's inner fog. The movement of the fog is likened to that of a cat,

again symbolic of the degradation, the enervated indecision of the Protagonist. They are both unstable and shifting. Prufrock, like the fog moving slowly by and settling down, is in no hurry to approach his lady love. He feels that there will be enough time to make a suitable face to meet others who have already made their faces. As D.E.S. Maxwell points out, it is Eliot's comment on the hypocrisy of modern life. There is no hurry as even a minute is enough to destroy or to create, to take decisions and then to revise them. Prufrock finds comfort in the immense possibilities of a minute. In short, he can do much before taking his toast and tea. Thus the triviality and hypocrisy of modern civilisation are brought out. This pre-occupation with trivial details of the sordid city life is very much in the manner of Laforgue and other French symbolists. Sudden contrasts, the change from the grand to the trivial, again reminds one of the symbolic technique of the French. The boredom of modern life is fittingly brought out by the fog-image. *The works of days and hands* reminds us of Hesiod's famous poem in which he glorifies physical work, but here work only leads to an intensification of indecision.

An Edwardian Dandy : Physical Decay

Prufrock is no hurry, for he feels that there will be enough time at his disposal after, "the taking of a toast and tea". He is a coward and does not have courage enough to face his lady. He is acutely conscious of his old age, of his baldness and of his thin body. He dresses himself like an Edwardian dandy, but all his dress fails to hide his physical decay:

*My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin.*

He is conscious that as he will go down the stairs people will comment on his age—"How his hair is growing thin"—and physical decrepitude. His question seems to him as important and epoch-making as the very disturbing of the universe. Has he the courage enough to ask such a question? However, there is no hurry for decision can be taken and revised and re-revised in a minute.

His Moral Cowardice

Prufrock has passed all his life in contemporary upper class society, and he knows everyone and everything that goes on in that society. Its triviality is vividly brought out by, "*I have measured out my life with coffee-spoons*". Modern life is passed in giving "tea parties" in which there is much frivolity and flippancy but little sense. He even recognises the voices coming out with music from the next room, "dying with a dying fall". Probably he has had intimate relations with the women who are moving in the salon. Thus is suggested by his remark :

*And I have known the arms already, known them all,
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare.*

It is symbolic of Prufrock's moral cowardice and degradation that he likens himself to a wriggling spider pinned to the wall:

*And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall.*

His life has been as useless as the butt-ends of smoked cigarettes. He has to ask an important question, but he loses all courage as he finds the women looking at him with searching eyes. This brings out his cowardice in matters of sex.

Boredom and Desire for Escape

Prufrock hesitates and fails to come to a decision. He does not know how to begin asking his overwhelming question. It is perhaps the perfume from the dresses of the women moving about in the room, that makes him think about them. He has known all of them and their tricks and their flirtations. He knows every aspect of modern life, both of the upper classes and of the lower classes. He even knows about the lonely men who lean out of the window in their shirt sleeves. He, too, is lonely like them, all alone in the wide world. He is bored with the trivial life, bored with his own indecision, and wishes that he were a sea-animal which catches its prey and runs swiftly across the floor of the sea. He would like to escape his present surroundings. But as it is, he is as lazy and inactive as the evening which lingers peacefully, as if sleeping, smoothed by somebody's long fingers. It is likened to an animal feigning sickness to avoid duty. Prufrock would like to be at rest like the evening, but as it is he has to make decisions which require effort and courage. The evening is symbolic of the protagonist's own consciousness and the recurrent animal imagery is a measure of his sense of his own helplessness and degradation.

Fear of Death

Prufrock continues with his self-analysis. After tea he would like to make his proposal and thus force the moment to a crisis. But would he have the necessary courage to do so? He has wept, prayed, and fasted to prepare himself for the awful moment. But even all this preparation has failed to give him courage. He is afraid, as if his head, like that of John the Baptist, would be cut and presented to the lady on a plate. However, he is neither a prophet, nor the question which he has to ask has anything to do with prophecy. But still he is afraid of death; he feels that death is ever lying in wait for him. All his greatness, all his determination, vanishes at the very thought of the question he has to ask, for it is as terrible to him as death itself.

Fear of Rejection

Prufrock is still undecided, and continues to ponder, if it would be worthwhile after tea, and the light chat in which one indulges on a tea-table, to take a bold decision, approach the lady and tell her all boldly, as if he were Lazarus come out of the dead to tell the world of his experiences in the under-world. Would it be worthwhile to reach a decision, and act with determination? The lines "*To have squeezed ball*", etc., closely echo similar lines in Marvell's "*Coy Mistress*". But it is useless to ask the question, because, ruminates Prufrock, the lady would certainly say that she never meant that she loved him, and was ready for marriage. He has entirely misunderstood her civility.

A Neurotic

Prufrock continues to hesitate, and does not know what to do, and what not to do. He is unable to understand his own self. He is nervous, and the image of a magic lantern throwing the shadow of his nerves on the screen is a fitting expression of the X-ray technique which Eliot has used to bring out what passes in the consciousness of the protagonist. The repetition of lines and phrases is symbolic of his indecision and hesitancy. Often a rhyme is postponed to indicate his indecision.

Extended Self-analysis

Prufrock now indulges in an extended piece of self-analysis. Though he says he is no Prince Hamlet, yet ironically he is one in his inaction and hesitancy. Only he has not the greatness of the Prince of Denmark. Humble and conscious of his own decay and degradation, he likens himself to Polonius, a mere attendant lord, full of high sentence, but in reality dull-headed, almost ridiculous and foolish. His pre-occupation with his own ageing and decrepitude is again brought out by his desire to dress himself according to the latest fashion to hide his age. Though he is old, he affects youth, like a dandy:

I grow old ... I grow Old...

I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

and further,

Shall I part my hair behind

I shall wear white flannel trousers.

A Romantic Desire for Escape

Prufrock is a day-dreamer, a romantic, who often has visions of beauty. Unable to face life, he longs to escape from it to some world of romance. He has often walked on the beach dressed in white flannel trousers—and he shall do so again to escape from the boredom of the present—and has seen

mermaids singing to each other. But such vision of beauty, such escape into a beautiful dream world, has been short-lived, for reality has always intruded upon his romantic dreams and awakened him to a sense of actuality. His romantic inner-self has always been 'submerged' in this way by the realities of life, which he wants to escape but cannot.

Conclusion

There seems to be no progress in the poem. It ends where it began. However, there has been a deeper and deeper probing into the consciousness of Prufrock. The poet has succeeded in highlighting the dilemma of an enervated man as well as the sordidness and pettiness of modern urban civilisation.

Epigraph—a motto at the beginning of a book or its part. Eliot's epigraphs are not merely decorative, they are functional. They suggest the underlying idea of the poem.

The Epigraph to the poem is taken from Dante's *Inferno*. Dante meets in Hell a character called *Guido* who agrees to tell Dante of his past only because he knows that, like him, the poet also is a lost soul, and so he will never return to earth to tell the people there of his confession. *The Epigraph* thus suggests a confession, but one in which there is something which ought to be hidden from others.

(C) SELECT ASPECTS OF THE POEM

1. NOTE OF REVOLT : BREAK FROM TRADITION

Referring to *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, **Prof. Leavis** in his well-known book *New Bearings in English Poetry* points out that the, “poem represents a complete break with the 19th century tradition, and a new start”. It is a revolutionary poem in more ways than one, which may be summarised as follows:

1. The decadent Edwardian and Georgian poetry was in the thinned out and exhausted romantic tradition. It dealt with the beauties of nature, like the rainbow, the kingfisher, the flowers, hills and dales. Nature is not the theme of *The Love Song*. Its setting is not rural but urban; we are in the city streets or in the salon of a fashionable restaurant. The squalor, the seediness, the loneliness of city life have been brought out by a mention of such details as restaurants spread over with oyster shells and sawdust, and of lonely men in their shirt sleeves looking out of their windows.

2. Besides nature, Love was the chief subject of conventional poetry. The romantics were never tired of speaking of their own love or of that of their

characters. The title of *The Love Song* is ironic. The protagonist is incapable even of facing his beloved and expressing his love to her. The poem marks a withdrawal from the love theme. He is an unheroic hero, a new kind of 'hero' entirely different from the traditional 'heroic' heroes. Prufrock has no heroic qualities; he is a 'neurotic', who can imagine himself to be a worm, a spider wriggling on the point of a needle, or a pair of ragged claws scuttling on the surface of the sea.

3. The traditional romantic poetry was a poetry of escape. It 'escaped' from the harsh realities of life into the beautiful world of nature, or into some golden age in the past. In this way, it provided relief by building up a beautiful, "country of the mind". In *The Love Song*, the purpose of the poet is not to entertain the readers or even to instruct them. He seeks merely to express the boredom, the horror, as well as the glory of the contemporary world. As Pinto puts it, "Here is a poet who has thoroughly immersed himself in the destructive elements, the sordidness, the stupidity and the ugliness of modern urban life without surrendering to its values, which he treats with the curiosity of an artist and the irony of a keenly calculating intellect". *The Love Song* presents a realistic picture of the hypocrisy, and the dull routine, and the neurosis and spiritual anguish which it generates.

4. The language of traditional poetry had become too poeticised. It had lost contact with the language of everyday use and so lacked life and vitality. In *The Love Song* the poet seeks to restore to it life and energy by using the colloquial idiom, and words lifted from common everyday usage. Thus the poem begins in a colloquial manner, "Let us go, you and I", and prosaic words of everyday use like 'ether', 'butt-ends of smoked cigarettes', 'coffee-spoons', etc., have been frequently used.

5. Its imagery is unconventional. It is drawn from the facts of modern life, and is suggestive of the ugliness and seediness of life in a big metropolis. Thus 'Evening' is likened to a patient 'etherised' upon the table, the 'nerves' of Prufrock are thrown on a screen in a pattern, as if by some magic lantern, and the city-streets are likened to tedious arguments.

6. The poet has, no doubt, used the conventional Iambic metre, but it has been broken up and made flexible to express the complexity and intricacy of contemporary life.

7. The traditional romantic poetry was subjective, while *The Love Song* is entirely objective. Prufrock is Eliot's creation, but in the poem he is not Eliot. He is the centre of the poem, and what passes within his consciousness forms its subject-matter.

In all these ways *The Love Song* marks a break from tradition, and gives a new direction and a new dimension to English poetry. It imparts to the readers a new perception of reality, the reality of urban life.

2. A DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE: SELF-REVELATION OF A NEUROTIC

An "Interior Monologue"

The Love Song of Prufrock has been called a dramatic monologue containing the self-revelation of a neurotic person. It is certainly dramatic, for it is the self-expression of Prufrock and not of the poet, and it is a monologue, for in it only one character does all the talking. No doubt, there is a 'you' in the poem, but this 'you' is only the other side of Prufrock who has a split personality. However, in the Browning type of dramatic monologue, what passes within the consciousness of *the dramatis personae* is organised by will and conscious effort, so that the monologue acquires coherence and there is logical development of thought. The presence of a listener or listeners is implied. But this logical link-up and coherence is lacking in *The Love Song*. There are sudden 'mental jumps' and 'free association of ideas' very much like the actual thought process. From this arises much of the difficulty which the readers of the poem have experienced. Hence it is that critics, like Dujardin, consider the poem to be an *Interior Monologue*. In an interior monologue we are taken directly into the sub-conscious of the protagonist and his interior life is revealed without any organisation by the conscious self of the character. Often the setting is merely a "psychological landscape", deriving its form and colour from the mental state of the central figure. In other words, the poet exploits the 'stream of consciousness technique' to communicate the drama of a human soul.

The Inner Conflict : Self-revelation of a Neurotic

Prufrock is the centre of the poem and what passes within his consciousness forms the substance of the poem. There are dramatic clashes and conflicts, not in action, but in thought and emotion, and in this way his indecision, his neurosis, his helplessness, and his sense of his own futility and impotence are vividly conveyed. The image of the evening being a patient, "etherised upon the table", the behaviour of the fog which is likened to a cat, Prufrock's own conception of himself as a worm wriggling on the wall at the point of a needle, etc., are all symbolic of his indecision, despair, inactivity, and mental vacuity. As the poem proceeds, the poet probes deeper and deeper into his consciousness and the past and present are telescoped and fused. Images like, 'I have measured out my life with coffee-spoons', 'the butt-ends of my days and ways' etc., are symbolic of the triviality and futility of his past existence. His romantic past is suggested by, "And I have known the arms already, known them all" etc., and it is contrasted with his present helplessness and physical decay, of which he himself is acutely conscious.

Prufrock's Failure

In this way, Prufrock is shown to be a tragic figure, despairing and pessimistic. His tragedy is a dual one. "*Prufrock is in love, and just as ethically he cannot bring himself to a point of decision, so romantically he cannot bring himself to propose to his lady*"—(A.G. George). He is conscious of his own increasing age and impotence and would like to escape the unpleasant necessity of making decisions:

*I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas*

But he cannot do so. He suffers from paralysis of will, has romantic dreams, but fails to act and fulfil them. His tragedy results from his failure to make a choice. He is afraid both to propose to his lady and to change his life.

Tragedy at the Heart of Life

The central situation in the poem is one of spiritual distress, and we have been given an exact evaluation of the entire career and character of Prufrock. But this is not all. Prufrock himself is a symbolic character symbolising the frustration and neurosis of the strange disease of modern life, its sick hurry and divided aims. By deft skilful touches the poet has highlighted the hollowness, the barrenness, and the triviality of modern urban life. Its squalor, its seediness, and its loneliness have all been brought out by the use of suitable imagery. It presents the many frustrations of modern life, but as Matthiessen points out, the poet has succeeded in showing that this tragedy is not of the 20th century alone, but of all ages. The tragedy of Prufrock has been shown, "to be at the heart of life", rather than resulting from the external circumstances of some particular age or character. In this way, the poet has risen from the particular to the general, and imparted to *The Love Song* the universality of a great work of art.

3. IMAGERY AND SYMBOLISM

Amalgamation of the Metaphysical and Symbolist Traditions

The Love Song of Prufrock is a poem depicting a mood, its purpose being to bring out the boredom, the ennui, the frustration, the neurosis, and the indecisiveness of the protagonist. This Eliot has done with great skill through the use of suitable imagery, which is not decorative, but functional and organic. The images are clear cut and precise, but they also symbolise the mental states of the central figure. The images reveal the influence both of the English Metaphysical poets of the 17th century and the French symbolist poets. The methods of these two schools have been "amalgamated, adapted and extended", with great skill. A detailed study of a few of the images will clearly bring out the point.

accompanied by a deeper plumbing or exploration into the consciousness of Prufrock. The sea-imagery, the hair-imagery, the images of relation or concentration of will or effort, all serve to give us a closer peep into the consciousness of the central figure.

4. THE TITLE OF THE POEM : ELIOT'S USE OF IRONY

The Title : Its Ironical Nature

The title of the poem *The Love Song of Alfred Prufrock* is ironical. The essence of irony is contrast, and the title is ironical because it makes us expect that the theme of the poem is the expression of love on the part of the protagonist. But quite to the contrary, there is no expression of love in the poem. The lover, Prufrock, is a neurotic who does not even have the courage to meet his lady, not to mention any seduction or love-making. The poem is an expression of his sense of his own futility, helplessness and impotence. He yearns for love, for intimate human relationships, but has not the courage enough to establish such relationships. There is irony even in the name, Prufrock, for it suggests inconsequence and fatuity.

Expression of Incapacity for Love

The poem, no doubt, opens with a cordial invitation to *you* to go out, as if this *you* is some companion of the female sex and the lover, Prufrock, intends to open out his heart to her. However, it soon becomes clear that this is not the case. In fact, Prufrock is a neurotic, a split personality, and the *I* and *you* are two aspects of his own self. Thus *The Love Song* is in reality a monologue, an indulgence in day-dreaming, rather than an intimate expression of love. It is an expression of his yearning for love, as well as of his incapacity for love. Indeed, the task of coming to a decision and facing his beloved is so unpleasant for him that he wishes himself to be a pair of ragged claws scuttling across the floor of the sea. Instead of being bold and 'heroic' as a lover should be, he is a moral coward who cannot face the searching eyes of ladies, and feels helpless in their presence like a worm wriggling on the point of a needle. He is romantically inclined, indulges in romantic reveries of, "mermaids singing each to each", but ironically enough he is conscious that they would not sing to him.

Ironical-Satiric Images : Apotheosis of the Trivial

Thus in the monologue there is no expression of love but only a futile and meaningless yearning for love. The title is ironical, and irony runs throughout the poem. Throughout the poet wears an ironic mask. In the manner of Laforgue, there is a constant mingling of seriousness with levity, of the grand with the prosaic, and irony is inherent in such contrasts. Thus in the following,

RHAPSODY ON A WINDY NIGHT

I have measured out my life with coffee spoons
the grandiose beginning is in sharp contrast with the prosaic end, and in this way the triviality and futility of modern life is exposed and ridiculed. Such ironic-satiric images abound in the poem. Prufrock's constant use of pompous and grandiloquent language for the trivial is ironical. He has to reach a decision regarding his visit to the lady and his expression of love to her. It is a trivial personal matter, but to Prufrock it is all important. Lines like the following,

Do I dare ?

Disturb the universe,

or the following,

To have squeezed the universe into a ball,

To roll it toward some overwhelming question

are the very consummation of irony in their apotheosis of the trivial. To the protagonist, a trivial matter seems to be an overwhelming question, which is likely to disturb the universe. He has made elaborate preparations for the task, he has, "wept and fasted, wept and prayed", but all his efforts avail him nothing. He says that he is not prince Hamlet, and the irony lies in the fact that he is indecisive like the Prince of Denmark, though he may not have his greatness.

Extended Use of Irony

In short, in *The Love Song of Prufrock*, Eliot has made extended use of irony to communicate the futility, neurosis, 'soul dampness' etc., generated by the contemporary urban civilisation.

(D) RHAPSODY ON A WINDY NIGHT : INTERPRETATION AND APPRECIATION

The Nature of the Poem : The Evocation of a Mood and Atmosphere

Rhapsody is a musical term, and therefore the title suggests that it is a poem based on a musical idea. A rhapsody is, "a musical composition of an enthusiastic nature". The rhapsodic nature of the poem is to be seen in lines like the following :

The lamp sputtered,

The lamp muttered in the dark,

The lamp hummed !

The details in the poem, including the sight of the street-lamps, the women in the doorway, the smells, the memories, are taken from the novel of a French writer, Charles Louis Philippe. The poem hardly means anything; it seems merely a game, but this is not really so. Its purpose is to evoke a

The Waste Land, 1922

(1) INTRODUCTORY

An Important Landmark : Note of Despair

T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* is an important landmark in the history of English poetry and one of the most talked about poems of the 20th century. It is a long poem of about four hundred forty lines in five parts entitled (1) *The Burial of the Dead* (2) *A Game of Chess* (3) *The Fire Sermon* (4) *Death by Water*, and (5) *What the Thunder Said*. It was written during the autumn of 1921, in Lausanne, Switzerland, where the poet was just recovering after a serious breakdown in health, caused by domestic worries and over-work. Personal health-crisis, the mental derangement of his wife, who ultimately died in a mental hospital, and the nerve-shattering impact of world War I, all account for the bleak and gloomy picture of the human predicament as presented in the poem, so much so that it has been supposed that the poem expresses the, "disillusionment of a generation". The gloom and despair of the poet are mirrored in the poem.

Fragmented and Difficult

The poem was first published in serial form in *The Criterion* in October and November, 1922. However, before publishing it the poet sent a rough draft of it to Ezra Pound who suggested far-reaching modifications. It was Pound who induced the poet to remove a quotation from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* which originally formed *The Epigraph* to the poem, and also not to use *Gerontion* as the prelude to it. He also suggested the elimination of much of the connecting material, and in this way the poem was reduced to half its original length. The gain in concentration was enormous, but the poem as it now stands looks at first sight fragmented and incoherent, to the great bewilderment and confusion of the readers. Later on, when *The Waste Land* was published in book form, Eliot added some Notes to it, and in this way admitted that the poem is difficult to follow.

First Publication : Hostile Criticism

The first publication of the poem raised a storm of adverse criticism. It was considered, at best, a series of slightly related separate poems. Thus the *New Statesman* called it, "Several separate poems entitled *The Waste Land*". Alec Brown in *The Scrutinies* called it, "a set of shorter poems

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tacked together, and Louis Untermeyer in *American Poetry* criticised it as a, "set of separate poems a piece of literary carpentry, scholarly joiner's work a pompous parade of erudition". Further, it was pointed out that the poet of *The Waste Land* looks on life, not directly, but through the spectacles of books. Even as important a critic as E.V. Lucas, reviewing the poem in 1923 commented that the poet found his inspiration in literature rather than in life, and Untermeyer, writing in the same vein, said that the poem appeals only to our acquired knowledge. *Times Literary Supplement* was more forthright in its criticism, and said that the poem was nothing but, "parodying without taste or skill" and *The Statesman* agreed with this view and added, "the parodies are cheap and the imitations inferior". The poem's urban setting and themes were also noticed and criticised. It was pointed out that the poet was almost, 'morbidly attracted' with urban squalor and seediness, rural impetus was lacking, and the lyrical impulse almost stifled. In short, the poem was considered as a sort of scholarly nonsense, and the hope was expressed that it would be left gradually, "to sink itself".

Appreciation : Epic of the Modern Age

However, with the passing of time the poem has been increasingly appreciated and glowing tributes have been paid to Mr. Eliot's remarkable achievement. Exhaustive commentaries of such penetrating critics as F.R. Leavis, Matthiessen, and Cleanth Brooks have gone a long way towards revealing the real meaning and significance of *The Waste Land*, and as a result it has come to be regarded as a highly condensed epic of the modern age. It will not be an exaggeration to say that, "*The Waste Land* is still the most influential poem of our age : nothing else so truly reflects the age and redeems it".

2. "THE WASTE LAND" : THE MYTHICAL BACKGROUND

On the eve of the composition of *The Waste Land*, T.S. Eliot had been reading Jessie Weston's book *From Ritual to Romance*, and James Frazer's famous book *The Golden Bough*. The poet himself has acknowledged that he was deeply influenced by these works or anthropology, and the ancient and primitive myths and legends which form the mythical background to the poem are derived from these books. Miss Weston's book supplied him with the legend of the Grail and the Fisher King, and from *The Golden Bough* he derived his knowledge of a number of vegetation and fertility myths and rituals, specially those connected with *Attis*, *Adonis* and *Osiris*. These myths are so fundamental to an understanding of the poem—they are the "objective co-relative", for the poet's emotions—that it would be worth while to examine in some detail.

The Grail Legend

The Holy Grail (cup or dish) legend is a medieval legend associated

German Princess, lives entirely on the physical plane, and is entirely forgetful of religious and moral values. In winter, they go south in search of pleasure and physical comforts. The shower of rain surprises her, she seeks shelter from it, as she is unaware of its purifying and fertilising significance.

The Biblical Waste Land

The Protagonist, Tiresias, then surveys the panorama of modern civilisation and finds it spiritually barren and dead. The stones, dead trees, dry stones without any sound of water, the hot sun, all symbolise spiritual desolation. Nothing spiritual can grow in this barren land. Broken images are the wrecks of old ideals and values in which man has lost faith. There is no relief, no shelter from the scorching heat of the sun, except under the shade of a red rock. The red rock symbolises the Christian Church, and the only hope of humanity lies in seeking its shelter, i.e. accepting the message of Christ. Man should seek the protection of God or the supernal. The shadow of the rock is immortal and internal, and so different from the shadow of man which is his death. In youth (morning) it is behind and in old age (evening) it is before him, ready to meet him. 'A handful of dust', is, 'man' who is afraid both of death and the anger of God, and who can find freedom from fear only by approaching Him for His forgiveness. The entire passage is rich in Biblical phraseology drawn from the *Ezekiel* and *Ecclesiastes* parts of the Old Testament. The reference is to the Hebrew Prophet (Ezekiel) who was taken on the mountain by an angel of God to survey the barren scene around. "O son of man" "fear in a handful of dust", etc., are Biblical phrases. As in *the Bible*, so here, Tiresias invites man to survey the panorama of desolation and futility which is contemporary history. In this way, the modern waste land is linked up with the Biblical waste land.

Guilty Love

We are then introduced to two episodes of guilty love which are Eliot's comment on the sexual copulation in the waste land, where sexual act has become beastly and sinful because it is divested of all spiritual import, all considerations of right and wrong. The extract in the German language is from Wagner's famous opera *Tristan and Isolde*, a story of guilty love. That the other love-episode is also of a guilty nature is shown by the fact that the other extract from the German opera ('Empty and blank the sea') is placed at the end of the second episode. The ecstasy of love passage is framed by two quotations from Wagner's opera, and in this way it acquires a new significance and a new meaning. The Hyacinth girl may be the German princess herself recounting a moment of passionate intensity in her youthful love or Tiresias remembering an episode of youthful love in his long career. But love, both of Tristan and of the Hyacinth girl, is guilty and hence instead of bringing a sense of fulfilment, it brings a sense of satiety and

boredom and futility. Such is the perversion of love and sex in the waste land. The words, "I was neither living nor dead" signify a moment of ecstasy, and "In the heart of light, a silence", echo a similar passage in Dante's *Inferno*, and bring out the futility of sex outside marriage.

The Tarot Pack : Its Significance

We then move into the very heart of the modern waste land i.e. London, Paris or any other Metropolitan city. The Tarot Pack referred to in the passage was used in ancient Egypt to forecast the rise and fall of the river Nile, the source of life and fertility. But in the contemporary world the function of the pack has degenerated, and it is used for trite and forbidden fortune-telling. This degeneration is symbolised by the fact that Madam Sosostri, the society fortune-teller, suffers from bad cold and lives in constant fear of the police. "One must be so careful these days," she says to the woman who has been consulting her as regards her future, and adds that she would bring the horoscope of Mrs. Equitone herself. The various cards in the Tarot Pack represent the different personages which are to figure in the following sections of the poem. They are as follows:

(a) The drowned Phoenician sailor. He symbolises the fertility God whose image was thrown into the sea every year to symbolise the end of summer. Drowning is a process of transformation and so his eyes have been transfigured into pearls. The line, 'Those are pearls, that were his eyes', is reminiscent of Aerial's song in *The Tempest*. (b) Belladonna, i.e. beautiful lady, Lady of the Rocks. She is the lady of situations, for she is adept in manipulating sex intrigues. She symbolises womanhood in the modern waste land. She figures in the section entitled *A Game of Chess*. Her name is reminiscent of the title of a painting of Virgin Mary by Leonardo, entitled: *Madonna of the Rock*. (c) The man with three Staves (staffs) is the King Fisher himself, symbol of degenerate humanity, requiring a three-fold remedy—to give, to sympathise, and to control. (d) The wheel, it symbolises the efforts of degenerate humanity to control and guide their own destiny, without caring for divine guidance. It may also symbolise the flux of life and the cycle of seasons. (e) The one-eyed merchant is the Smyrna merchant who in the past brought both religion and sexuality to Europe. Now he has only one eye, i.e. represents only sexuality and has lost his religious function. His 'one eye' also symbolises the contemporary decay and dissolution. The card which is blank represents religion which he brought, and the degenerate humanity cannot realise this spiritual significance of the merchant. (f) The Hanged Man stands for the dead fertility god or Christ crucified, but such spiritual values are not to be found in the modern waste land. He is 'hooded' and the fortune-teller cannot recognise him, and (g) The crowds of people, 'walking in a ring', are the London crowds going through their daily round of existence, dull, boring, monotonous. They figure in the last passage of this section.

The Unreal City

The protagonist then surveys the 'Unreal city', London, and the crowd that moves over London Bridge. The 'unreal city' may be any city in the spiritual waste land. That it is enveloped in "brown fog" reminds one of a similar city in Baudelaire. The crowds moving over London Bridge are the spiritually dead citizens of the waste land going their daily round of dull routine. They put us in mind of similar crowds in Dante's *Inferno* and, "I had not thought death had done so many" is also from *Inferno*. These wretched creatures, spiritually tormented, are clerks, cashiers, business dignitaries etc., who begin their work at nine, which was also the hour of Christ's crucifixion. But the hour means nothing to them except that it is the hour to begin work. Thus London is linked up with Paris and Dante's *Inferno* and in this way it is emphasised that all cities are one city and loss of faith has always resulted in sterility and spiritual death—life-in-death. They do not live, they merely exist, as do dead things.

Stetson : Unity of all Experience

Tiresias now stops one Stetson, an acquaintance of his, whom he had first met at Mylae, an important naval battle, as **Matthiessen** points out, in the Punic Wars between Greece and Carthage. Stetson symbolises humanity. At any rate, writes **Cleanth Brooks**, "it is plain that Eliot in having the protagonist address the friend in a London street as one who was with him in the Punic War rather than as one who was with him in the World War is making the point that all wars are one war ; all experience one experience". Various interpretations have been given regarding the significance of "the corpse" which he plants, and of the 'dog' which is likely to dig it up. Cleanth Brooks takes the dog to mean Humanitarianism, rationalism or scientific mentality, which, "in their concern for man, extirpate the supernatural—dig up the corpse of the buried fertility god and thus prevent the rebirth of life". The best explanation, however, seems to be that of **D.E.S. Maxwell**. According to his view, the corpse is the 'spiritual failure' of Stetson or modern humanity, the dog is the conscience which will like to awaken humanity to its spiritual failure but this the spiritually dead humanity does not like, and so wants the dog to be kept away. This is clearly seen in the fact that Tiresias calls Stetson his double, his brother. The French quotation is from Baudelaire ; it completes the universalisation of Stetson and shows that he is Everyman including the reader and Mr. Eliot himself. The quotation, "Oh keep the dog far hence, that is friend to man", is an adaptation from Webster's drama *The White Devil*. But the words, *woolf* and *foe* have been altered to suit Eliot's purpose.

Conclusion

To conclude : In the first section the general theme of *The Waste Land* has been stated. It has been stated that life in the contemporary world is a

Contemporary world is a life-in-death. It is a living death, for man has lost faith in spiritual values. There is general decay and decomposition. Love has degenerated into lust, sex has lost its proper function, and is no longer a source of life and vitality.

The successive sections of the poem will provide concrete illustrations of this theme.

Title—"The Order of the Burial of the Dead" is the full title of the Burial service in the Church of England.

Mixing memory and desire—In April there are stirrings of life in nature. However, this stirring of life and return of fertility is painful to the waste landers, for it reminds them of the dead fertility god and his re-birth. In other words, they are reminded of their own spiritual death and need for spiritual regeneration. However, regeneration requires effort, and effort is painful to the degenerate man in the modern world.

Winter kept us warm.....and go south in the winter—Tiresias, the protagonist, remembers another spring in his youth, in which he had enjoyed the company of a German girl, Marie. For various details of this passage, Eliot has made use of the autobiography, *My Past, 1913*, of a German countess, Marie Larisch.

Winter kept us warm—For Marie, and other waste landers, winter is a comfortable month, for it makes them forget the need of action. They go south in search of pleasure, and thus they remain warm in winter.

Covering earth.....snow—snow covers the earth, there are no stirrings of life, and so the need of action is forgotten. Such forgetfulness is welcome.

Feeding a little life.....tubers—life is lived at the lowest ebb; a mere physical existence with spiritual sterility and death. Such is the life of the waste landers. *Tubers*—roots.

Summer surprise.....of rain—rain, the symbol of spiritual regeneration, is not welcome to the spiritually dead people. They seek shelter from it. *Starnbergersee*—a lake near Munich, in Germany. *Colonnade*—an avenue or row of trees. *Hofgarten*—a public park in Munich.

Bin gar Keine.....deutsch—"I am not Russian at all; I come from Lithuania; I am a real German." The words are spoken by Marie who belongs to the Lithuanian royal family.

And when we were children.....down we went—Marie recounts her experiences to Tiresias. Her cousin is an arch-duke and she had much fun in his company. Once they went out riding in a sledge. Marie was afraid, but the Duke asked her to hold on to him tightly. It was such fun. Perhaps, they then experienced a moment of intense sexual excitement. This conclusion is borne out by the fact that Marie enjoys to go to the mountains and the South where she feels more free, free for amorous adventures and sex experiences.

The Waste Land : Paraphrase

(1) BURIAL OF THE DEAD

April, the month of spring, is the cruelest month for the modern Waste Landers, for it reminds them of life and activity (of which they do not like to be reminded). Lilacs (lily flowers) grow out of the land which had remained dead, so to say, in the winter months. The month of April mixes up both memories and desires in their consciousness. Their dull souls are stirred up as the roots of trees and plants are stirred up into activity by spring rain.

Marie, a German Princess, remembers her love-experiences and sexual pleasures during the winter season which is now over. In the winter season the earth was covered with snow and there were no stirrings of life and so the need for action was forgotten. There was minimum of activity, and spiritually they were as dry and dead as dried tubers (roots). But they migrated to the South, where it was warm and pleasant (and where they could have their fill of sexual and sensual pleasures). When they were near the lake Starnbergersee in Germany, rain came so early in summer that they were taken by surprise and took shelter under a row of trees. When it was sunshine again they went to Hofgarten, a pleasure park in Munich, Germany. There they drank coffee and talked for an hour. The German Princess tells her companion and lover that she was not Russian at all. She came from Luthinia and she was a real German. When they were children, they lived with their cousin, the arch-Duke, once he took her out for a ride in a sledge (a small dog-driven cart). He drove fast, and she was frightened. The Duke asked her to hold him tightly. She did so, and down they went. In the mountains a person feels free (freely enjoys sex). She then tells her that she reads for a long time during the nights and then goes South in the winter season. (Marie is a typical Waste Lander, and such is life in the modern waste land).

The modern waste land is entirely desolate and the people are all spiritually dead and sterile. It is like a rocky barren land in which no trees can grow. There is no fertile soil but only stones and rubbish. In this waste land Man does not know what spiritual fertility means. In this waste land there are only heaps of broken images or idols (false spiritual values); it is scorched with the heat of the sun, the trees are dead and give no shelter, and

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the singing of the cricket provides no relief, and no life-giving water flows over the dry stones. The waste landers can protect themselves from the heat of the sun, only by taking shelter in the shadow of the red rock. This shade or protection of the red rock is entirely different from the shadow (of Death) which is behind them in the morning (early life) and which rises to meet them in the evening of life (old age), and of which they are so much afraid. Man is mortal, a mere handful of dust, and he lives in constant fear of death.

Then follow two extracts from a German opera of Wagner entitled *Tristan and Isolde*, and they enclose within them another episode of guilty love. The first four lines in German mean that fresh blows the wind, and the ocean is calm, but his beloved has not come. Where does she linger? The other extract of one line means "empty and desolate the sea." The lover is hopeless. He is ill and will die soon. Guilty love results in spiritual deadness. This is also illustrated by the episode of the *Hyacinth girl*. The lover wept after illicit sex, he could not see or speak anything. He could not understand the truth.

There is spiritual degeneration all around in the modern waste land. Even the function of the Tarot pack of cards has degenerated. It is used for fortune-telling and thus cheating the credulous people. Madame Sorostises, the famous fortune-teller, is sick and suffers from cold. But she is considered to be the wisest woman in Europe, as she can foretell the future with a wicked pack of cards. Her clients stand round them, and she shows them, one by one, the cards which foretell their respective futures. On one of the cards there is a picture of a drowned Phoenician sailor, (whose eyes have been transformed into pearls by the re-generating power of water) but such regenerating is not possible in the modern age. On another card there is the picture of Belladonna, a hard-hearted lady, and so called 'the Lady of the Rocks', who is an expert in manipulating sex-intrigues. On another card there is the picture of a man with three staves (The man may be the legendary King Fisher with his *Trishul*, symbolising the three-fold way of salvation). Next there is a card with the picture of a wheel on it (symbolising the ups and downs of life). Then there is the card with the picture of a one-eyed merchant on it (symbolising the degeneration of the Syrian merchants). Then there is a blank card, a card on which the fortune-teller sees no picture, but it is supposed to represent something which he, the Syrian merchant, carried on his back (it symbolises religion and the mystery of religious truths which the degenerate fortune-teller fails to see or understand). She does not find the card with the picture of the Hanged Man (Christ) on it (because she is blind to spiritual truths). She advised one of her clients to fear death by water. Then she sees crowds of people walking in a ring (symbolising the dull routine of modern life). Then one of the clients pays to her, her fee, and she thanks him (or her). She also asks this client to tell Mrs. Equitone, if he happens to meet her, that she would

herself bring her horoscope to her. Fortune telling is an illegal activity and so they have to be very careful.

The poet next addresses the 'unreal city' which may be any city in the modern waste land—London, Paris or any other—for there is the same spiritual desolation everywhere. The poet observes it from a distance covered with the brown fog of the winter morning. He sees a crowd of people flowing over the London bridge, and he had never imagined that there were so many dead people (spiritually dead). They sighed frequently, as if they were in great suffering. Each of them walked with his eyes fixed on his feet. They were all unhappy and dissatisfied with downcast eyes. They went up the hill, and then went down to King William Street, a street in which a number of banks and offices are located, and in which these spiritually dead people work. There stands the church of Saint Mary Woolnoth, and the sound of its clock striking the hour nine is a deadly sound to them, for it is the time when they must commence their daily work (which is hateful and tiresome to them). The poet (or Tiresias) recognises one of them and stops him by calling loudly his name "Stetson". They were together in the same ship at Mylae (a great naval battle in the ancient Punic war between Rome and Cathage). Last year Stetson had planted a corpse in his garden, and now his friend asks him, if it has begun to sprout and will it bear flowers this year, (corpse here symbolises spiritual deadness) and its sprouting symbolises spiritual regeneration, or has it been completely deadened by sudden unexpected frost. He advised Stetson to keep away at a distance the dog, who is a friend to man, and who would dig out the corpse with its nails, and so prevent it from sprouting (Dog symbolises human conscience which reminds man of the need of spiritual regeneration, but such effort is disliked by the spiritually degenerate modern man and hence he likes to keep the dog far away). The passage concludes with the words, "you hypocrite you are like me. You are my brother." In other words, all are equally dead spiritually in the modern waste land.

(2) A GAME OF CHESS

The poet begins by describing the bedroom and dressing table of a rich and fashionable lady, belonging to the highest sections of society. She sat in a chair which shone brightly like a throne studded with jewels. In its bright light her marble dressing table also 'glowed' or shone brightly. Her looking-glass was held up by wooden pillars on which were carved vine creepers with grapes, from which small cupid, the love-god, peeped out (and another cupid was shown as hiding his eyes behind his wings). Her looking-glass and glowing table reflected back the bright light falling on them from a branched candle-stand holding seven candles, and in this way the brightness of the light was doubled. Jewels taken out of satin cases were scattered on the table in rich abundance. They glittered in the bright light, and their

glitter further intensified the brightness of the light falling upon them from above.

There were also small bottles made of ivory or coloured glass. They were full of artificial scents purchased from foreign, unknown countries. Some of these were in the form of liquids or powders. As the bottles were opened, rich perfumes came out and overwhelmed the senses with their strong odour and troubled and confused those who inhaled such strong odours. These synthetic, artificial odours were carried up to the ceiling by the fresh air that came through the window. The fresh air loaded with these perfumes reached the ceiling and fretted the light of the candles, so that the smoke of the candles reached the well decorated ceiling of the room. The ceiling was decorated with sunken panels, and these decorative patterns were now fretted by air and smoke.

In the fire-place there burnt huge logs of sea-wood which were pushed into the fire-place by rods of copper. The fire acquired a greenish orange colour, because the fire-place was framed by coloured stones. The figure of a dolphine was also carved on the fire-place, and it seemed to be swimming in this coloured light. On the old mantle-piece there was carved a scene through which one could see, as it were, a wood or a garden. The scene depicted the story of Philomela who was raped by the barbarous King Tarus, her own brother-in-law, but was later on transformed into a nightingale, the bird with a golden throat. She was raped by the use of force, but was transformed into the bird with a golden throat, and since then deserts and forests have echoed with her sweet song. Maidens are still raped as Philomela was raped, but while in the past, as a result of suffering, she was transformed into the bird with golden throat, no such transformation is possible in the modern age. Nightingales still sing out their painful story, but it is mere senseless "Jug, Jug" to the dirty ears of the modern waste landers. They fail to understand the real significance of the nightingale's song. Women are still raped, they are still pursued and force is still used against them, but in the past, there was transformation through suffering.

Some other figures were also carved on the mantle-piece, which seemed to lean out as if trying to listen to some sound in that closed and silent room. Soon there was heard the shuffling sound of the foot-steps of someone climbing up the stairs. The lady knew that it was her lover, and she was emotionally excited. Her Excitement was so great that her hair which she was combing and which was spread out in the dazzling light of the room, seemed to have 'fiery points', and they glowed as if they would speak out. But they remained still in a sinister, savage manner (but still they conveyed the intensity of the lady's excitement).

After sometime (in which the lady and her lover must have indulged in sex), the lady said to her lover that her nerves were bad that night. Yes they

were very bad, and she wanted him to stay with her that night and speak to her. She asked him why did he never speak to her. He must speak to her. Next she asked him what he was thinking of when the lover still remained silent, she repeated her question, "what are you thinking of?" and told him rather impatiently, "I never know what you are thinking". "You always keep thinking and never talk to me." The lover merely replied that he was thinking that they lived in a lane infested with rats, so many that they could eat away even the bones of a dead man.

At this point there is some sound or noise and the nervous, frightened lady asked what that noise was. The lover replied that it was the wind under the door. The noise was heard again, and the lady asked as to what the wind was doing there (under the door). The lover merely replied that it was nothing, that it meant nothing. The nervous lady then impatiently asked, if he knew nothing, if he saw nothing, and did he remember nothing. The lover replied that he remembered a line from Shakespeare *The Tempest*: "those are pearls that were his eyes." At this the lady angrily asked him if he were alive or not, and was there nothing in his head except that meaningless line of Shakespeare. The lover replied that the line he remembered was so elegant and so intelligent. (It was not mere meaningless nonsense). The lady was entirely dissatisfied as is evident from her repeated question, "What shall I do now? What shall I do?" If he did not talk to her, she would rush out into the street, half-dressed as she was, and would walk the street with her hair stretched out. Then she asked what they would do to-morrow. She did not know what they would ever do. The lover simply reminded her of the daily routine of their lives. They would have a hot bath at ten, and if it rained they would go out at four in a closed car. They will play a game of chess as usual and wait eagerly with wide open eyes for a knock upon the door (indicating the arrival of some guest or some lover of the lady).

Next the poet (or Tiresias) narrates another episode, this time from middle class life. The speaker is a friend of Lil, and she is talking to some friends seated in a restaurant. When after the war Lil's husband was retrenched, she herself told Lil frankly and clearly without mincing any words—at this point a voice is heard asking them to hurry up, for it was time to close the restaurant—that as her husband Albert was now coming back home, she should try to make herself a bit more smart. He would certainly ask her what she did with the money he gave her to get a nice set of teeth for herself. He swore that he could not bear to look at her, and she (the friend of Lil) told her that she herself also could not bear to look at her (her teeth made her look so repulsive). She should think of poor Albert. He has been in the army for four years, and now on his return home, he wants to have a good time and enjoy himself. If he could not get that enjoyment in the company of Lil, there are others who will give him that enjoyment. Lil asked angrily if there were others who would give him a good time and the

friend (the narrator of the episode) replied that there were certainly such other women. Lil replied that in that case she would know whom to thank for it (She meant in that case she would know that her friend was the person concerned) and then looked angrily at her friend. At this point there is again a call to them to hurry up, for it was the time to close the restaurant.

But they continued to talk without heeding the call. Lil's friend frankly told Lil that if she did not like her advice and did not care to make herself more smart, then she was free to do what she liked. There were other women who could pick and choose and if any one of them eloped with him, then she must not complain that she was not warned at the right time (she, her friend, has herself warned her). She should be ashamed of herself to look so old (while, in reality she was so young, only thirty-one years of age). Lil replied with a sad face that she could not help it. She took certain pills to bring about an abortion, and the pills damaged her health. They already had five children, and she nearly died when her sixth child George was born. The chemist had told her that it would be all right but she has never been the same, after taking the pills. Lil's friend told her that she was a great fool, and if Albert does not leave her alone (*i.e.* has sexual intercourse with her), then she must bear the consequences. Why did they marry, if they did not want children?

There is again the call asking them to hurry, for it was time for the restaurant to be closed up, but they continue to talk. The friend of Lil further tells them that on that Sunday Albert returned home. They had a hot pig for dinner, and they invited her to enjoy it hot.

Now the call to hurry up is impatiently repeated twice, and they have to put an end to their conversation. They bid good night or say "ta ta" to each other, and then leave in a hurry.

(3) THE FIRE SERMON

The section begins with the poet (or Tiresias) pointing out that the tent, formed over the river Thames by the trees on the opposite bank meeting at the top in the spring season, is now broken because, with the coming of autumn, the trees have shed their leaves. The last few leaves that look like fingers clutching each other, are also gradually falling on the wet banks of the river. The wind is blowing over the land covered with brown leaves, but there is none to listen to it. The river banks are desolate, for the ladies who had thronged them in the spring are no longer there. They have departed. The poet (or Tiresias) remembers the lines from Spenser's *Epithalamium*, and asks the river Thames to flow on gently till he ends his song. The river no longer carries on its surface empty bottles, sandwich papers, silk handkerchiefs, card-boxes, cigarette ends, and other such evidence of picnic that were held on its bank in the summer season. The ladies have all departed, and so also have departed their friends and lovers, the good-for-

nothing heirs of rich directors of business concerns in the city of London. They have gone away even without leaving their addresses (with the ladies whose company they had enjoyed). It is all animal-like copulation and at this degeneration Tiresias weeps again, as he once wept long ago when he sat by the lake Lemon. He asks the sweet river to flow on till he ends his song, and he promises that his song would neither be long, nor shall it be sung loudly. He would soon end his song, for when a cold gust of wind blows behind him he hears the rattling of bones, and a chuckle so loud that it seems to come from a mouth open wide from ear to ear (and the sounds terrify him).

Once long ago on a cold winter evening, Tiresias, the all knowing, was fishing in the dull canal behind the gashouse. He heard the sound of a rat's creeping softly through the vegetation, it dragged its dirty, slime-covered belly with great difficulty along the banks of the river. As he sat fishing, he thought of his brother, King Fisher, who had become a cripple and also of the death of his father before him. Next, he saw in his imagination white bodies lying naked on the low damp ground, and of bones lying in a little low dry garret, rattled by the rats' feet year after year (all these are images of ugliness, squalor and spiritual barrenness). But he could hear behind him, from time to time, the sound of horns and motors, carrying Sweney (a lustful person) to Mrs. Porter (a woman of loose character). The moon shone brightly on Mrs. Porter and her daughter who wash their feet in soda-water to make them look fairer still and so attract more customers. Tiresias is reminded of a line from Paul Verlaine's opera *Parsifal*, "Oh, these children voices singing in the choir," suggesting the degeneration of the modern waste landers whose lust is aroused even by children.

The next passage of four lines refers to the rape of Philomela and her transformation into a nightingale, the bird with the golden throat. She was rudely raped by her brother-in-law, King Taru, but suffering transformed her into the nightingale. But her song is mere meaningless "Twit, twit, twit", or 'Jug, Jug' for the modern waste landers. They fail to understand its real significance.

Modern cities, like Paris, London or any other, which even at noon are covered with a brown fog are hot beds of corruption and sexual perversion. Syrian merchants, like Mr. Eugenides, come to these cities with their pockets full of currants, and with documents showing that cartage and insurance is free on goods bought by them, if payment is made at sight. They are degenerate and shabby, homo-sexuals. They speak vulgar French, and once Tiresias himself was invited by one of them to have lunch with him at Cannon Street Hotel, and then pass the week-end with him at the Metropole (Both these places were much frequented by homosexuals and other such perverts).

Next, Tiresias narrates an episode from lower middle class life. The typist works all day in her office, and at dusk her eyes and back turn upwards from her desk, i.e. she looks up as the office time is drawing to a close. She is compared to a human engine, throbbing and waiting like a taxi. Says Tiresias that now he may have grown old and blind but in his life he has seen and experienced all. He has had experiences both as a man and a woman. Now he is an old man, but he has also the wrinkled breasts of an old woman. The time of dusk is the time when all return to their homes, it is the time when even the sailors return home from the sea. At this time the typist also returns home. He sees her in her home. First she removes the breakfast plates etc., from the table, next she lights her stove to prepare her evening meal, and serves her food in empty tin boxes. She then takes out her clothes spread out on the windows so that they may be dried up by sun and heaps them up on the divan which is also her bed for the night. Her stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays are all placed on the divan. Tiresias, the old man with wrinkled breasts, sees the scene, and can easily foretell the rest, for he himself had waited as the typist was then waiting for the arrival of her lover.

The guest soon arrived. He was a youngman with a red face. He was a small house-agents clerk, and he had a bold stare. He was one of those mean and vulgar people, who try to look self-confident but who are as awkward in their movements as a Bradford millionaire with his silk hat on his head. He at once guessed that the time (for sexual advances) was favourable, the meal had ended, and the typist was bored and tired. He tried to engage her in love-making, she did not rebuke him, but remained indifferent to his love-making, thus indicating that she did not desire it. He was drunk and determined, and at once proceeded to have sexual-intercourse with her. His hands explored her body so to say, and she did not stop him. This was sufficient for him, for he was not vain, and did not wait for any response from her side. She was indifferent, and he welcomed her indifference (Tiresias comments that he himself has had such experience on similar divans or beds, he who has sat below the walls of Thebes and walked among the lowest of the dead). Having had his fill of sex, the youngman kissed her for the last time in a patronising manner and groped his way down the dark stairs.

The typist turned and looked for a moment in her mirror. She was hardly conscious of the fact that her lover had gone away. Only one half-formed thought passed through her mind, "well now that is done, and I am glad that it is all over." She was a lovely woman and she had stooped to folly. But now she walked up and down the room, smoothed her hair automatically and unconsciously, and then put a record on the gramophone (so that its music may make her forget it all).

The music of the gramophone reminds Tiresias of the music which he once heard as he walked on the banks of the river Thames. He went along the Strand, the London street which leads to the locality where the poorer people live. He heard it as he went down the Queen Victoria Street, close to the river Thames. London is a degenerate city. There he has sometimes heard in lower Thames Street the pleasant, but plaintive music of a mandoline coming out of a public bar mixed with the sound of clatter of vessels, the chatter of fishmen dining and resting there at noon. There is situated the well-known church of Magnus Martyr with its walls splendidly decorated with silver and gold, but nobody cares to visit the church. (Rather, it is suggested that the church be demolished).

In the modern-age, the river Thames has been made dirty by oil and tar which is carried by ships sailing on it. But there was a time (in the age of Queen Elizabeth) when well-decorated barges sailed on it. They were driven by the tides of water or by the wind which filled their beautiful red sails. They sailed in the direction in which the wind blew. But now the ship carry along with them logs of wood, drifting on the river, towards the Greenwich lake or pool of water, opposite to which is situated the Isle of Dogs (The river has been completely commercialised and polluted).

There was a time when Queen Elizabeth and her favourite Earl of Leicester used to sail on the river in their beautiful barge. Its front was golden, and it was all coloured red and gold. It sailed briskly as the South-west wind filled the sails and there was swift current in the water. As they sailed down the river, they could hear the sound of bells coming out of the white towers of the prison situated nearby.

Now all this is changed. The London streets close to the banks of the river have dusty trees and trams run there with their smoke and ugly noises. The speaker, the first of the three girls, who live near the river, say that she was ruined in the two river-side holiday picnic spots called Richmond and Kew. There she was raped in a narrow boat. She was forced to lie flat there, and raise her feet. The second Thames daughter says that she was ruined in Moorgate locality in the eastern part of London, where poor people live. She felt much humiliated. After the event, the person concerned wept. He promised a new start, that he would change his ways, but the poor girl made no comments on what he had done or what he said. She is so poor and insignificant that it is futile for her to resent anything (the absolute helplessness of the poor is thus stressed). The third Thames daughter says that she was ruined on Margate sands, a picnic spot on the Thames. She does not remember anything. She was so dazed and bewildered. Her life, and the life of the humble people, who are her parents, friends or relatives, is as worthless and insignificant as broken finger-nails. They are entirely helpless, and expect nothing (but suffering and exploitation).

PARAPHRASE

The poet is reminded of the words of St. Augustine in his *Confessions*: "To Carthage then I came, where a cauldron of unholy loves sang all about my ears." The entire modern waste land is burning in the fire of lust. Only God can pluck them out of this fire of lust and save their souls. As it is, they are all burning in this fire. To whatever section or strata of society they may belong, they are equally lustful and degenerate. They are all burning.

(4) DEATH BY WATER

Phlebas was a Phoenician sailor who were famous in ancient times for their skill in navigation. Now he has been dead for a fortnight. Now he no longer remembers the cry of gulls which he used to hear during his voyages. Now he has also forgotten all about the rise and fall of the waves of the deep sea. His materialistic activity *i.e.* his pursuit of wealth has also come to an end. His bones were caught by a current of water under the sea, and were carried away with a slow, whispering sound. As his body rose and fell with the current, he passed (in the reverse order) the various stages of a man's life from youth to old age. At last his body was caught in a whirlpool and was seen no more. Thus ended his earthly existence.

We should learn a lesson from his tragic death. Whether we are believers or non-believers, we should not seek to control our destiny and drive ourselves the boat of our life. If we do so we shall meet the tragic fate of Phlebas, who was once as tall and handsome as we are. We should have faith in God, and leave our destiny in His hands.

(5) WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

The section begins with an account of the arrest of Christ at the hand of his enemies. They came in search of him with torches in their hands. Their faces were dirty with sweat and red with anger. He was arrested in a garden and there was frosty (death-like) silence after his arrest. He suffered great agony in palaces and prisons made of stones. Then the mobs shouted angrily as it was rumoured that Christ was about to be released. Prison and palaces resounded with their shouts. Then at last Christ was crucified. But at the very moment of his crucifixion there was thunder over the distant mountains indicating that soon there will be rain (rain is the symbol of regeneration). The poet adds that Christ did not die when he was crucified. He lived on in the hearts of the devout but now he is dead because we the modern waste landers have forgotten him and his teachings. We who were living when Christ was crucified, are now dead. We are now dead spiritually and we make no efforts for our spiritual salvation or regeneration. We are passive and inactive so far as spiritual matters are concerned.

The second passage refers to the journey of the Questers (Sir Perceival and others) in search of the holy Grail. They reach the kingdom of King

Fisher and climb the mountain on the top of which, it was believed, the holy Grail was kept in a chapel called the Chapel Perilous. It was a difficult journey for there was no water and they were all thirsty. There were only rocks all around them. It was a sandy road that went up the mountains in a winding, zig-zag manner. They were rocky mountains without any water. If only there were some water, they would have stopped to drink it, they were so thirsty. But among the rocks none can stop and think. Sweat was dry on their faces, and their feet were covered with sand. The repetition of, "If there were only water among the rocks," conveys their intense thirst and longing for water. The caves of the mountains were horrible, like wide-open mouths full of rotten teeth. In these dead mountain-mouths there was no water at all. They were absolutely dry and could not even spit. The questers could find no comfort in those mountains—they could neither stand, nor sit, nor lie down to rest. They had to go on climbing constantly. There was not even silence in the mountains. They could hear the sound of thunder, at a distance, but it was a thunder without any rain. It was sterile or barren thunder bringing with it no life-giving or regenerating rain. There was not even solitude in the mountains. They were not alone there, but were surrounded by red, angry faces that seemed to sneer and snarl at them. They could see such faces through the doors of houses whose mud-plaster was cracked. Such sights horrified them and added to their suffering. They would not have suffered so much if there were water and no rocks, or even if there were rocks, but also water. If only there were a spring of water or a pool of water among the rocks, they would have drunk from it. Even if they had heard the sound of water, it would have given them some hope. But the only sound they could hear was the singing of Cicada (an insect) or the whispering sound made by the wind as it passed through dry grass. They heard the sound of water falling over a rock, but alas! it was only the hermit-thrush—whose song sounds very much like the falling of water—singing in the pine trees. Its song, "Drip, drop, drip" etc, sounds very much like the sound produced by the falling of the drops of water, but in reality there was no water at all.

The third passage describes the journey of two of the disciples of Christ who are going to the Biblical waste Land of Emmaus. One of them asks his companion as to who was the third person walking by his side. When he counted, there were only two, he and his companion. But when he looked ahead towards the white road, he always saw a third person walking by the side of his companion. This figure was well-wrapped in a brown cloak, and had a hood over its head, so that he could not say whether it was a man or a woman. So he asks his companion once again to tell him who it was that walked by his side.

The fourth passage describes the aimless journey of the modern waste landers, uprooted from their hearths and homes. A murmuring sound of

lamentation is heard in the air, as if some women were mourning and crying. There are huge crowds of people wandering over endless plains. The earth is cracked at places and they stumble and fall. The plains on which they wander are spread out as far as the horizon. They are ringed only by the horizon. A city is seen over the mountains, which cracks, is broken, but again assumes a particular shape, and then bursts again, in the air at the time of dusk. The towers of churches or other big buildings of that city seem to be falling down. The city may be any of the unreal cities in the modern waste land. It may be Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria, Vienna, London or any other city in the modern waste land. All are equally unreal and equally in ruins so far as religion and spiritual values are concerned.

These uprooted people of the modern waste land suffer from neurosis and hysteria. This becomes clear from the behaviour of a woman in the crowd who tightly draws out her long black hair and plays upon them as upon the strings of a fiddle, a musical instrument (She seems to have gone mad). Horrible sights are to be seen. In the dim light, at the time of dusk, one can see bats with baby faces who whistle, beat their wings, crawl, lean downward, down a blackened wall. There are towers upside down. They are towers of churches far from them still comes out the sound of bells reminding the people that it was the time for them to go to the church and say their prayers, but nobody heeds them. To the modern humanity they indicate merely the passing of time (and carry no spiritual significance). Voices are also heard singing out of empty cisterns and empty wells (symbolic of spiritual dryness). There is spiritual sterility all around.

In the next passage, the poet reminds the readers of the grail-legend, and the journey of the questers. They have climbed the mountain, despite all difficulties and horrors, and are now close to Chapel Perilous where the grail is kept. About the chapel, it is a scene of desolation. The graves are open, and the wind blows through the dry grass with a song-like sound. The chapel is empty, there is nobody in it except the wind. It has no windows, and its doors swing as the wind blows. The bones of the dead can be seen in the open graves. These dry bones can harm no one, but it is an ugly, horrible sound. But a cock stood on the roof tree and crowed loudly. Its crowing signifies regeneration and spiritual re-birth of the questers (as well as of King Fisher and his kingdom) for they were now close to the Chapel Perilous, and their quest was about to end successfully. Soon there is a flash of lightning and a damp gust of wind bringing rain, symbolising the dawn of spiritual regeneration.

The passage which follows refers to the condition of utter draught and famine which once prevailed in India. The water level in the holy river Ganges was low. The leaves were hanging down in a lifeless manner, dry and withered. All waited anxiously for rain. There were black clouds over the distant Himalayas, but there was no rain. The beasts of the jungle

suffered from intense thirst, and sat helplessly. All men and beasts alike sat crowded together in complete silence. They prayed to god (*Prajapati*) and the God replied to them in a loud thundering voice.

First, God spoke the word 'DA' that is to say that if they wanted his blessings, they should give themselves over to some noble cause. But the modern waste landers are not devoted to any noble cause and hence their spiritual degeneration. Devotion or surrender to some noble cause is possible only in moments of intense emotional excitement. Only in such moments does man have the awful courage of giving himself over absolutely to some noble cause so that he cannot retrace his steps when he thinks over the matter more prudently (in a worldly sense). It is only through such devotion to some noble cause, that humanity has survived spiritually and culturally. Such people have suffered martyrdom, but the account of their suffering and martyrdom is not to be found in the obituaries (accounts of life and death that are daily published in the newspapers). It is not to be found in the accounts of their life and death carved on tomb stones, which are covered by spiders with their cobwebs. Neither is it to be found in their wills, the seals of which are broken by lean lawyers, after they are dead, and their rooms are empty.

The thunder spoke to them a second time, and repeated the word 'DA'. It means sympathise. God commanded them to come out of the prison of self and enter imaginatively into the sorrow and suffering of others. It is only rarely, once in a life time, that one turns the key of the prison of self, and comes out of it. Otherwise, the key to the prison of self keeps it closed, and the more they close it and shut themselves in their own respective prisons the more isolated they grow. It is only at night, and that, too, rarely when the conscious self is asleep, that the voice of God speaks to the soul, and one forgets for the time being his own ego and pride. It is only in such rare moments that the Coriolanus in each of us is regenerated and we forget, for the time being, our own self-centredness, come out of the prison of self, and sympathise with others. Such sympathy is essential for spiritual regeneration.

The thunder spoke to the people a third time also, and the same word 'DA' was repeated. The DA spoken now means *Damyata*, that is to say self-control, control over one's own passions and desires. It is only such self-control that makes the journey of life easy and comfortable. Life may be likened to a boat. Just as a boat sails easily and smoothly, almost gaily, when the pilot is well-trained and skilful, so also the journey of life becomes smooth and happy when we have acquired self-control. Then the sea becomes calm, there are no storms, our hearts respond joyfully to the calm sea, and the boat of life goes ahead gaily as it is controlled by skilled hands. Such self-control is essential for a successful and happy life.

Once the poet (or Tiresias) sat fishing on the banks of a river with a dry and desolate land behind him. He was fishing so that, at least, he may set his own land in order *i.e.* work out his own spiritual regeneration. In the modern waste land London Bridge is falling down and it keeps falling down constantly, *i.e.* spiritual values are decaying and disintegrating, particularly in large cities like London, Paris or any other. The poet is reminded of a line of Dante, "Please remember my pains." It is only through suffering that regeneration takes place. He also refers to the story of Procene, who suffered and was transformed into a swallow. The story also implies that spiritual regeneration can take place only through suffering. The lines from a French sonnet, "the Prince of Aquitace" of the ruined tower also convey the same lesson. Such are the lessons which the poet has learned for his own salvation, to repair his own spiritual ruin. As Heironymo, the mad father in Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, tells the actors that he can provide them with a good play which they should enact, so also the poet has 'fitted' his readers with the way in which they can work out their own spiritual salvation. If they give themselves over to some noble cause, if they learn to sympathise, if they also acquire self-control, and if they remember that suffering alone leads to spiritual salvation, they would acquire spiritual calm and tranquility. Then there would be nothing but "Shanthi, Shanthi, Shanthi" in their lives.

Q. 5. How does Eliot employ irony and satire in 'The Love of J. Alfred Prufrock' ? Illustrate from the poem.

Or

Discuss the ironic effects in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' and examine critically the elements in it.

Title of the Poem, Ironical

In 'The Love Song of Prufrock' Eliot has made extended use of irony to communicate the futility, neurosis, soul dampness etc., generated by the contemporary urban civilisation. Even the title of the poem is ironical. The essence of irony is contrast, and the title is ironical because it makes us expect that the theme of the poem is the expression of love on the part of the protagonist. But quite to the contrary, there is no expression of love in the poem. The lover, Prufrock, is a neurotic who does not even have the courage to meet his lady, not to mention any seduction or love-making. The poem is an expression of his sense of his own futility, helplessness and impotence. He yearns for love, for intimate human relationships, but has not the courage enough to establish such relationships. There is irony even in the name, Prufrock, for it suggests inconsequence and fatuity.

The Juxtaposition

In the poem, the important things are placed side by side with the trivial. There is a mingling of the high and the low, the grand and the mean. Look at the sharp contrast between the first and the last line—"Let us go then you and I" is the very antithesis of the last line—"Till human voices wake us and we drown". Similarly what starts as very important in value is brought down to the level of the mean and the trivial as for example: "I have measured out my life with coffee spoons". He throws into relief the futility and barrenness of urban life.

Expression of Incapacity for Love

The poem opens with a cordial invitation to *you* to go out with him in the evening. This '*you*' is the beloved of Prufrock and Prufrock intends to ask some overwhelming question—obviously the proposal to his lady. However, it soon becomes clear that this is not the case. In fact, Prufrock is a neurotic, a split personality, and the '*I*' and '*you*' are two aspects of his own self. Thus *The Love Song* is in reality a monologue, an indulgence in day dreaming, rather than an intimate expression of love. It is an expression of his yearning for love, as well as of his incapacity for love. The two main hurdles to the making of a proposal are his old age and his consequent decline in health and vigour, and secondly his reluctance to give up the single state in which he has been engaging himself in sexual intimacy with opposite sex. The irony of situation is that he would like to make love but

there are serious issues which prevent him from doing so. He yearns for love but he has no capacity for it. Indeed, the task of coming to a decision and facing his beloved is so unpleasant for him that he wishes himself to be a pair of ragged claws scuttling across the floor of the sea. Instead of being bold and 'heroic' as a lover should be, he is a moral coward who cannot face the searching eyes of ladies, and feels helpless in their presence like a worm wriggling on the point of a needle. He is romantically inclined, indulges in romantic reveries of, "mermaids singing each to each", but ironically enough he is conscious that they would not sing to him.

Irony-Satiric Images

Thus in the monologue there is no expression of love but only a futile and meaningless yearning for love. The title is ironical, and irony runs throughout the poem. Throughout the poet wears an ironic mask. In the manner of Laforgue, there is a constant mingling of seriousness with levity, of the grand with the prosaic, and irony is inherent in such contrasts. Thus in the following,

I have measured out my life with coffee spoons

the grandiose beginning is in sharp contrast with the prosaic end, and in this way the triviality and futility of modern life is exposed and ridiculed. Such irony-satiric images abound in the poem.

In the beginning of the poem there is identity between Prufrock and the evening, and "the streets that follow like a tedious argument", and the, "restless nights in one-night cheap hotels". Similarly there is identity between him and the evening fog:

*The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window panes
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window panes
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,*

*.....
And seeing that it was soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.*

The image is an elaborate metaphysical conceit. The fog is likened to a cat, lazy and malingering. The behaviour of the fog is also symbolical of the inner foggiess of Prufrock. Like the fog, he too, "malingers" and shirks the unpleasant task of expressing his love. Each is unstable and shifting; each is undecided and vaguely troubled. The image fittingly brings out his 'enervated indecision', his boredom and ennui. Prufrock never reaches a decision, but lingers on in indecision like the fog over pools and window panes. He is afflicted with 'soul dampness', complexities of life are too

much for him, and the poem ends with a reiteration of his desire to escape to, "the chambers of the sea". The image is symbolic of his death-wish.

Glorification of the Insignificant

Eliot's technique of raising his trivial and personal to the level of universal issue is exemplified in this poem. Thus Prufrock's constant use of pompous and grandiloquent language for the trivial is ironical. He has to reach a decision regarding his visit to the lady and his expression of love to her. It is a trivial personal matter, but to Prufrock it is all important, lines like the following,

Do I dare ?

Disturb the universe,

or the following,

To have squeezed the universe into a ball,

To roll it toward some overwhelming question.

are the very consummation of irony in their apotheosis of the trivial. To the protagonist, a trivial matter seems to be an overwhelming question, which is likely to disturb the universe. For example, the simple decoration of proposal is compared to a sort of earthquake, disturbing the universe. Similarly, the decoration of his love is as difficult as squeezing the universe into a ball. The matter of a proposal is as difficult as "to murder and create". The frivolity of making this important decision is revealed in the lover's assertion that he can revise his decision in a minute. As the poet says in this poem:

"For I have known them all already, known them all".

Though "he has wept" and "fasted" and "prayed", he cannot muster courage to declare his love. His real cowardice is a reflection of the soul's sickness and the futility of the modern urban civilisation. There is another bit of irony in his assumption that the beloved might reject him. She might deny any love or affection for him. She may even cover her having a soft corner for him with a veneer of politeness and courtesy. These anticipations are only excuses for his delay and inaction. Moreover, though he is old he wears the latest fashioned clothes in order to hide age and to cover up his baldness. There is an implied irony in what he wishes to appear physically.

He says that he is not prince Hamlet, and the irony lies in the fact that he is indecisive like the Prince of Denmark, though he may not have his greatness.

Conclusion

Eliot in this poem represent a complete break with the nineteenth century. Nature is not the theme of the 'Love Song' nor is love. The title

itself is ironic. The protagonist is incapable even of facing his beloved and expressing his love to her. With the use of ironical language and situation Eliot is well able to express the boredom, loneliness and sordidness of the modern urban life.

Q. 6. What does Eliot owe to oriental thought in *The Waste Land*.

Or

Explain critically those images which Eliot has used to present contemporary life in *The Waste Land*.

Eliot's Debt to Two Books

Eliot was considerably influenced by the two works of anthropology – Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* and James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. The poet himself acknowledged that the ancient and primitive myths and legends which form the mythical background to the poem are derived from these books. Jessie Weston's book supplied him with the legend of the Grail and the Fisher King, and from *The Golden Bough* he derived a number of vegetation and fertility myths and rituals, specially those connected with Attis, Adonis and Osiris.

The Grail Legend

The Holy Grail (cup or dish) legend is a medieval legend associated with the adventures of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table. The Grail was the cup or plate used by Christ for his Last Supper, in which the blood of the Saviour was collected when he was crucified. It was long before his this holy vessel was discovered to have acquired medicinal and miraculous properties so that it became an object of devotion and worship, and chapels for it came to be built in several countries and its worship was organized. The lance used to pierce the sides of Christ was also kept with it. But a time came when the original Grail disappeared mysteriously from the chapel where it was kept and many a bold knight staked his life and lost in the arduous task of searching for it. It was generally believed that the lost Grail sometimes appeared in the sky as a floating saucer of great beauty and splendour, but it could be seen only by a knight of virginal purity. Miss Weston, in her *From Ritual to Romance*, has treated the legend critically and historically and has concluded, that the Grail was originally connected with the fertility myth, as is witnessed by its sexual symbols (cup and the lance symbolising the male and female organs respectively), but later on it suffered a sea-change through its association with Christ.

The Vegetation and Fertility Myths

The study of *The Golden Bough* and *From Ritual to Romance* made Eliot realise that all primitive nature-myths follow a common pattern—death, rebirth, death. This recurrent pattern centres round the cyclic, seasonal

changes in nature. Thus winter is the death of the year, it is followed by re-birth in the spring when there are stirrings of life in all nature once again. There is the loss of land's fertility in winter, but with the life-giving rain life and vitality is re-born. This process was re-enacted in a number of vegetation rituals and ceremonies. Thus in Egypt the effigy of the vegetation god, *Osiris*, was stuck with corn grains and was buried in the earth. This symbolised the death of the vegetation god. Very soon the grains sprouted, symbolising the re-birth of the god. This vegetation ceremony has been referred to in the opening lines of the *Burial of the Dead*. Symbolically, this recurrent pattern of birth and death stood for spiritual death, as a result of sin and sexual perversion, and spiritual regeneration, the result of suffering and penance. This recurrent pattern has been taken over in the Christian myth, in the birth of Christ, his crucifixion, and his resurrection.

Adonis and *Atis*, like *Osiris*, were also corn Gods associated with vegetation ceremonies, both in Egypt and in other countries. In some rituals, as in the one mentioned above, the corn God was buried, while in others, his effigy was immersed in the waters of some river. The coming up of the effigy signified the re-birth of the vegetation God. The ceremony marked the commencement of the sowing of the crop and was celebrated with singing, dancing, and merry-making. *The Death by Water* Section of *The Waste Land* conjures up the image of this ceremony.

The Medieval Waste Land of Fisher King

It is said that in the course of their hazardous quest Parsifal, the Quester, and his fellow-adventurers happened to arrive in a country ruled over by a prince named the Fisher King. It was one of the regions where Grail worship had been anciently in vogue, and a temple, known as Chapel Perilous, still stood there, broken and dilapidated, as a mournful memorial of what once was, but later had ceased to be. It was said that the lost Grail was hidden in this chapel. At that time the king himself had become a physical wreck, maimed and impotent, as a result, it was whispered, of a sin committed by his soldiery in outraging the chastity of a group of nuns attached to the Grail chapel. The impotency of the Fisher King was reflected sympathetically in the land of which he was the head and the ruler. It had become dry and barren, the haunt and home of want and famine. The king, however, was waiting with hope, despite his illness, that one day the knight of the pure soul would visit his star-crossed kingdom, march to the Chapel Perilous, answer questions and solve riddles. This would be followed by a ritual washing of his, king Fisher's sinful body, which would purge it and renew its health and energy. It was also hoped that this rebirth of the king would be followed by the life-giving rains to the parched land and the thirsty kingdom, which would once more enjoy its earlier fertility.

Tiresias

Tiresias, the central figure of Eliot's *Waste Land*, is historically connected with the story of king Oedipus of Thebes, which is clearly and demonstrably the classical legend of a waste land, with striking resemblances to the drought infested, sin-ridden kingdom of the medieval Fisher King Oedipus who unwittingly kills his father and marries his own mother and thus calls down upon his supposedly innocent head the curse of the Gods in the form of a virulent plague, epidemic and destructive, which neither king nor commoner fails to regard as a punishment for some dark and hidden crime. Tiresias, the blind prophet, is summoned and when compelled by the king tells the shocking truth that he, the king himself, is the plague-spot. Such is the conspiracy of circumstances that the king is slowly, but irresistibly, driven to the realization of this horrible truth. Nothing remains for the king but the duty of expiation, self-mutilation, self-exile, self-abasement and a prolonged penance, which eventually result in spiritual calm and inner illumination.

Biblical Waste Land

There is a third waste land also the Biblical waste land or evil land of Emmaus, mentioned in Ecclesiastes and Ezekiel parts of the old Testament. The Prophet Ezekiel warns his followers to remember God and give up idolatry. Their sins have laid the country waste and regeneration will come only when they return to God. 'The Dead Tree', 'The Handful of Dust', 'The Dry Grass', 'The Cricket', 'The Rack', etc, are all derived from the Biblical imagery of decay and desolation in the parts mentioned above.

Other Sources

Eliot's inspiration for the poem is a book about the immemorial antiquity of the search for union with the source of inner vitality. The legend behind it is one which aims at finding the source of this vitality and undertaking the necessary disciplines involved in that search. But there are many, other external sources for Eliot's poem: these include Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*, Dante's *Purgatorio*, Buddha and St. Augustine as preachers of asceticism, and a legend from an *Upanishad* giving moral instruction.

Conclusion

Eliot has linked up the past with the present, and universalised the topical. He has thus shown that the spiritual sterility of the modern age is nothing peculiar to it. Sin, specially sexual perversion, has always resulted in spiritual decay and desolation. Spiritual regeneration will result, life-giving rain will come, only when humanity is prepared to pay the price in the form of suffering and penance.

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Thus by the use of these medieval myths the poet has succeeded in depersonalising his emotions, and thus has imparted the impersonality of great art to this poem.