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## UNIT 47 T.S. ELIOT : *THE WASTE LAND* (III)

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### 47.0 OBJECTIVES

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In the previous Unit, you studied the first two parts of *The Waste Land*, each of which we explained to you with the help of a glossary, detailed interpretation and additional critical comments. Ideally, you ought to read that along with the text of the first two parts more than once to get the best instruction out of it. In the present Unit, we follow the same pattern in teaching you the last three parts of *The Waste Land*, i.e., III. "The Fire Sermon", IV. "Death by Water", V. "What the Thunder said". After a careful reading of this Unit, you should be able to answer textual questions on these three parts of the poem. You should also be able to relate each part to the other two, and again the three included here to the two explained in Unit 2. That would give you a complete understanding of *The Waste Land* as a unified work of literary art.

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### 47.1 INTRODUCTION

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In this Unit, we explain the meaning and poetic significance of the last three parts of *The Waste Land*. All the complexities have been smoothed out for you, the numerous symbols and metaphors are unravelled, and the multiple literary allusions have been explained in detail with reference to the contexts from which the poet has drawn those to add to the deeper and wide-ranging meaning of his poem. We follow the earlier model of putting the whole thing across to you with the help of glossaries, interpretations, and critical comments, wherever necessary. Towards the end, we provide a conclusion of our extended discussion of Eliot's poem spread over three Units. There follows the usual summing up of the present Unit as well as the answers and hints to Check Your Progress Exercises." That brings to its logical end our effort of introducing and teaching you the text of *The Waste Land* of T.S. Eliot.

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### 47.2 III THE FIRE SERMON

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The title of the third part of *The Waste Land* is taken from the Fire Sermon preached by Gautam Buddha (563BC-483BC) to convince his followers, the Buddhists, of the negative and evil influence on the human mind of the fires of lust, passion, infatuation and hatred. Though Buddhism as a religious faith started in India, but through the efforts of King Ashoka, the Maurya ruler of the third century BC, it spread across South Asia in Sri Lanka, Burma, Malayasia, Tibet, Thailand, China and

Indonesia. The Buddha's message is still remembered, respected and followed in these countries.

#### 47.2.1 Glossary

<b>nymphs</b>	:	literally pastoral goddesses, but here taken in the sense of pretty young girls loved and entertained by the sons of City directors.
<b>testimony</b>	:	evidence, proof
<b>City</b>	:	the commercial centre of London
<b>Leman</b>	:	the French name for Lake Geneva in Switzerland
<b>chuckle</b>	:	wide-mouthed laughing gesture
<b>slimy</b>	:	covered with wet mud
<b>Musing</b>	:	thinking of
<b>garret</b>	:	poor men's attic (top storey of a house)
<b>Rattled</b>	:	disturbed
<i>Et O... cupolet</i>	:	'And, O those children's voices singing in the dome!'
<i>Tereu</i>	:	the Latin vocative form of Tereus
<b>Smyrna</b>	:	modern Izmir in Western Turkey
<b>currants</b>	:	dried grapes used in cookery
<b>C. I. F.</b>	:	'Cost, insurance and freight'
<b>domotic French</b>	:	the French of common popular speech
<b>Metropole</b>	:	the fashionable hotel at Brighton, a sea resort on south coast of England
<b>violet hour</b>	:	time of sunset, when the violet colour is prominent on the western horizon
<b>throbbing</b>	:	with idling engine as at a red-light crossing
<b>perilously</b>	:	dangerously
<b>combinations</b>	:	undergarments covering body and legs
<b>Stockings</b>	:	close-fitting long socks that cover feet and legs.
<b>camisole</b>	:	women's cotton undergarment
<b>stays</b>	:	not to be confused with the third person present tense of the verb 'stay'; it means 'support for waist or corset'
<b>wrinkled dugs</b>	:	shrunken teats or nipples
<b>carbuncular</b>	:	red or inflamed

<b>assurance</b>	:	self-confidence
<b>Bradford</b>	:	an industrial town in North England
<b>propitious</b>	:	lucky, fortunate
<b>caresses</b>	:	tender loving touches
<b>unreproved</b>	:	unoffended
<b>Tiresias</b>	:	the blind prophet of Thebes in Greece in the days of King Oedipus, about whom Sophocles, the Greek poet of the fifth century BC has written three tragedies known as the 'Theban Trilogy'
<b>gropes</b>	:	feels around in the dark
<b>strand</b>	:	street leading towards the city part of London
<b>whining</b>	:	sad music
<b>mandoline</b>	:	stringed musical instrument
<b>Magnus Martyr</b>	:	the church of Magnus the Martyr built by Christopher Wren, a great British architect.
<b>Ionian</b>	:	ancient Greek style of architecture
<b>barges</b>	:	large flat-bottomed boats
<b>leeward</b>	:	the side away from the wind
<b>spar</b>	:	the strong central pole of a large sailing boat or ship
<b>Greenwich reach:</b>		the south bank of the Thames at Greenwich
<b><i>Weillia ... leialala</i></b>	:	the lament of the Rhine maidens in an opera by the German poet, Wagner
<b>stern</b>	:	the rearside of a boat or ship
<b>brisk swell</b>	:	fast-moving waves
<b>peal</b>	:	ringing of bells
<b>Highbury</b>	:	residential suburb in the north of London
<b>Richmond and Kew</b>	:	two riverside districts on the Thames
<b>Moorgate</b>	:	poor area in the City of London
<b>Margate sands</b>	:	seaside resort in Kent on the Thames
<b>Carthage</b>	:	close to Algeria in North Africa
<b>pluckest</b>	:	takes out (of fire)

## 47.2.2 Interpretation

**Lines 173-86:** This opening passage of the third part of *The Waste Land* provides some visual images of the River Thames in autumn. The leafy branches of the trees on the river bank provide a tent-like shelter in summer. But, at the present time, the leaves that resemble hands with fingers have fallen down on the wet earth, and there is no shelter. The cold wind blows across the land without the noisy flutter of the leaves. The pretty young girls are gone away. Line 176, 'Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song', recalls the refrain of Edmund Spenser's 'Prothalamion.' There is no evidence of the picnics and parties held on the river bank on the summer nights—none of the debris (left overs) that people generally leave behind on such occasions. The sons of the directors of the companies situated in the City part of London, the boy friends of the 'gone away' girls too have departed from the scene. They have not left their addresses by which they could be traced.

**Line 182** is an echo of the psalmist's lament, when he recalls the longing of the Jews for their homeland during their exile in biblical Babylonia: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion (Israel)." The biblical associations of the line evoke the poet's feelings of despair and alienation from contemporary life of the early twentieth century. Lines 185-6 are an ironic variation on the theme of 'To His Coy Mistress' by Andrew Marvell, the seventeenth century English metaphysical poet:

But at my back I always hear  
Time's winged chariot hurrying near.

This sad image of death is the very opposite of Spenser's lyricism. Eliot suggests death as a human skeleton with the naked jaws spread to their extreme limits in a gesture of ominous laughter.

**Lines 187-202** This second passage presents a contrasting picture of the River Thames. The persona or speaker of these lines ironically identifies himself with the Fisher King of the legend. The image of the slimy rat dragging itself through the bushes on the bank is an ugly picture providing a contrast to the earlier bright images of the river. The persona identifies himself with Prince Ferdinand of Naples in *The Tempest* of Shakespeare, mourning the reported death by drowning of his father. This obsession with the naked realism of the images connected with death are opposed to the renewal of life in the fertility myths. There follows an echo of a line in Marvell's 'To His Coy Mistress'. Sweeney is Eliot's recurring image of the natural, sensual man, and also figures in poems like 'Sweeney Erect', 'Sweeney among the Nightingales', and 'Sweeney Agonistes.'

In his notes, Eliot says that lines 199-201 are taken from a ballad which someone wrote to him from Sydney, Australia. Mrs. Porter was a legendary brothel-keeper in Cairo, Egypt, in some versions of the ballad, which was popular among the Australian soldiers during the First World War. The soda water is not the aerated drink but the bicarbonate of soda solution. The next line is in French, from Paul Verlaine's (1844-96) 'Parsifal', and it means 'And, O those children's voices singing in the dome.' The quotation evokes an ironic awareness that such aspiration perhaps exists only in art and literature.

**Lines 203-6** The first two lines consist of sounds made by birds like sparrows and nightingales. And, then there is repetition of a phrase that, obviously, refers to the rape of Philomela by her sister's husband, King Tereus. Hence the single word "Tereu" which concludes this passage.

**Lines 207-14** The 'Unreal City' could be any city in Europe, America or Asia. It is a ghost city-hence unreal-where the passing crowd and life in general are hidden under the fog of a winter noon. Eugenides, the merchant from western Turkey, is ironically associated with the Fool in the Tarot cards. Eliot once admitted that, while working in a bank in the City, he was invited by an unshaven man from Smyrna with currants in his pockets. Also, in any business transaction, the documents of ownership and transport would be handed over to the purchaser in exchange for a bank draft payable at night.

**Lines 215-27** At the time of sunset, when the western sky bears a violet colour, the clerks of the banks and offices in the City stand up and stretch their backs as a gesture of realization (after a whole day spent working at the desk). Their bodies are like taxi-engines idling at the side of the road, waiting for a customer. At that very hour, Tiresias (the blind prophet of ancient Greece), who lives between the two sexes of a male and female, and whose breasts are shrunken in old age, has a vision of what life brings to each man and woman as reward of their daily labour.

That is the time when the sailor comes home from the sea. The typist returns home from office at tea-time, clears the dishes from the dining table and makes preparations for the dinner. Her undergarments, touched by the last rays of the sun, are hanging dangerously out of the windows. On the divan, which serves as her bed at night, are spread all the various items of her clothes of daily use.

**Lines 228-48** Tiresias foresees the scene that follows and make a prophecy for the future. Like the London typist, he too waits for the visitor expected by her. Finally, the young man with a disfigured face, arrives at the typist's flat. He is no hero, only an ordinary house-agent's clerk, but his self-assurance is as high as that of a rich industrialist from Bradford in North England. The clerk imagines that the typist must have finished her dinner, and must be feeling tired and bored. Hence, she would be in a receptive mood to love-making. He tried his best to arouse her passion by caressing her, but she remains unresponsive. Finally being himself sexually aroused, he assaults her without any resistance from her. He is so egotistical and selfish that he does not expect a response from her, and regards her indifference as a welcome to his advances. Tiresias, the eternal witness of Thebes in ancient Greece, has undergone the suffering and pain of the typist centuries ago, in anticipation of the events to come. He has given company to the lowest among the dead, and he watches ineffectually while the clerk gives a parting kiss to the typist before finding his way down by the darkly lit stairs.

**Lines 249-56** The typist has hardly noticed the departure of her lover. She looks at her reflection in the mirror, and feels relieved that the pre-arranged sexual encounter is over. The narrator quotes a line from Olivia's song in Oliver Goldsmith's novel, *The Vicar of Wakefield* (of the eighteenth century) to suggest a contrast between the typist's situation and the seducer of Olivia in that novel. The typist moves

around in her room absent-mindedly smooth down her ruffled hair, and puts a record on the gramophone as if nothing has happened. This episode of the typist and the clerk, like the one in the pub before it, is a deliberate theatrical device by Eliot to achieve a satiric effect.

**Lines 257-65** Here, the poet begins with a quotation from Ferdinand's reflection on the music that distracts him away from through of his father's supposed death by drowning in *The Tempest*, I.ii 192. The music is an ironic reference to the typist gramophone record while recalling Ariel's song in Shakespeare's play. The narrator of *The Waste Land* takes us along the Strand and Queen Victoria Street in the City district of London, where is heard the sad music of a mandoline near a public bar in Lower Thames Street. He also remembers the clattering sound of utensils and talk of the fishermen who usually relax there at noon. Nearby, the walls of the Church of St. Magnus the Martyr display the white and gold columns of the Greek (Ionian) style of its architecture.

**Lines 266-78** In his notes to the poem, Eliot says that the song of the three Thames daughters starts here. From line 292 to line 306, they speak one by one. His Thames daughters merge with the nymphs of the opening section of this part of *The Waste Land* and present an ironic variation of Spenser's Daughters of the Flood in Prothalamion and the German poet Wagner's Rhine daughters in the opera, *The Twilight of the Gods*, III. i. The Thames daughters complain that the surface of the river is covered with oil and tar; the flat-bottomed freight-carrying boats have to shift position between the high and low tides of the sea, the widespread red sails change direction with the tide while hanging by the central poles of the barges that push floating logs of wood down the river towards Greenwich and the Isle of Dogs. The two lines that conclude this passage are the lament of the Rhine maidens of Wagner.

**Lines 279-91** In his note to the first line of this passage, Eliot refers to the History of England, vii, 349 by J.A. Froude, where there is an allusion to the love-affair between Queen Elizabeth I (of the late sixteenth century) and her minister, Earl of Leicester. They were once together on a boating excursion on the Thames where the Spanish Ambassador was also present. The passage that follows recalls Enobarbus's description of Cleopatra's barge in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (see interpretation of line 77 in Unit of this Block). The rear - side of the boat was painted in red and gold. The quick-flowing waves struck against both shores of the river. The southwesterly winds carried the sound of the ringing bells down stream where the white stone towers of the Tower of London could be seen. There follows a repetition of the lament of the Rhine maidens of Wagner.

**Lines 292-311** What follows in this passage is the song of the three Thames daughters. The first speaks of the boring trams and dusty trees of Highbury in North London. The riverside districts of Richmond and Kew do not please her either. Floating down near Richmond she raises her knees, lying on her back on the floor of a narrow boat. This action is obviously, meant for the convenience of the lover accompanying her in the boat. The second girl says that she had her encounter in the poor quarter (area) of Moorgate. At that time, her heart was virtually under her feet because of the sexual excitement she experienced. After the encounter, her lover feels sorry and cries out of remorse. He promises to behave properly in future, a remark

on which she makes no comment. Being practical-minded, she knows there is no reason for her to resent the physical union that she and her lover enjoyed together. The third Thames daughter declares on Margate Sands, a seaside resort on the Thames in Kent, that she finds it difficult to connect different things together. She ponders over the broken fingernails of her dirty hands (which is a hint of her low working class origin in society).

The reference to Carthage is taken from the Confessions (iii, 1) of St. Augustine, who was born in Algeria and went to Carthage at the age of sixteen. In the passage under reference, he writes of the sensual temptations of his youth. The word 'burning' repeated four times indicates not only sexual passion, but also the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah as recounted in the Old Testament. Eliot points out in his note, that the coming together of the Buddha and St. Augustine, the two representatives of East and West, in their opinion of lustful physical passion in love, is the culmination of this part of *The Waste Land*. Both the religious leaders refer to sensual temptation as a burning fire. While the Buddha advocates a rejection of the pleasures of the senses leading to freedom from passion and rebirth, St. Augustine trusts to the grace of God for the ultimate salvation of man in Christian terms.

### 47.2.3 Critical Comments

**Line 173** This line provides a link with the last line of the second part of *The Waste Land*, and thereby helps to maintain the continuity of the poem. The images that one finds in this line recall Ophelia's death by drowning in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and that is already alluded to in the final passage of part II, 'A Game of Chess', passage from the German book, in which the author writes of the drunken spiritual frenzy of Eastern Europe, where the saint and the seer listen to the people's song with tears in their eyes. That work by Hesse is a commentary on how *The Brothers Karamozov* of the Russian novelist Dostoevsky (1821-81) provides a prophetic vision of the collapse of Europe that actually came about during the First World War. Hesse spent those years in neutral Switzerland, and wrote denunciations of militarism and nationalism. He regards the maintenance of civilization as a conflict between man's rationality and his repressed wild instincts, which he seems emerging as the decay of European culture. Eliot shares the vision of Hesse whom he visited in May 1922. Line 367 recalls Christ's words to the women who lamented him as he was led away to be crucified: 'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but for yourselves and your children. (New Testament, Luke xxiii, 27-8). The word 'horde' came into the European languages from the steppes of Central Asia. It means a mass of creatures on the move, on the attack, a blind menace, more animal than human. That is how the 'hooded' Mongols came down on horses in their thousands from their Central Asian camps to invade and spread their empire across South Asia and China, led by fierce commanders like Chinggis Khan and Halaku Khan. They symbolise the primitive invading forces, under whose relentless onslaught the European cultures, like those of the Jews and Christians (Jerusalem), the Greeks (Athens), the Pharaohs and the Arabs (Alexandria), the East Europeans (Vienna), and the British (London) fall as of little consequence. The various cities of Europe, Asia and Africa, mentioned in this passage, are examples of the 'Unreal City' of Eliot's wasteland. The decay of Europe is seen within the perspective of the rise and fall of civilizations throughout

history. Eliot's vision of the unreal cities might be intended as a contrast to the ideal city of Plato as described by him in his *Republic*.

**Line 377-84** The fantastic and unreal imagery of these lines was partly inspired by a painting of Hieronymus Bosch, the fifteenth century Dutch artist. In the panel entitled 'Hell', Bosch has painted night, marshy visions of Hell with a bat-like semi-human figure crawling head-first down a rock wall. This passage in the poem recreates the strange and unreal world of Bosh's symbolic picture of hell.

**Lines 176** This is the refrain of 'Prothalamion', a much appreciated lyrical poem by Edmund Spenser of the late sixteenth century. While celebrating a double marriage at which he was present, Spenser expresses his appreciation of the River Thames and the city of London through which it flows before going down into the sea. Hence the refrain, which appeals to the river to flow softly till the poet ends his song. By repeating the line here, Eliot too celebrates London and the tames.

**Lines 197-8** In his notes, Eliot refers to the *Parliament of Bees*, a play by John Day (1574-1640?) quoting :

When of the sudden, listening, you shall hear,  
A noise of horns and hunting, which shall bring  
Actaeon to Diana in the spring,  
Where all shall see her naked skin...

In Greek mythology, Actaeon was a hunter who surprised Diana, the goddess of chastity, when she was bathing in a river, As punishment, the goddess turned him into a stag, and he was torn to pieces by his own dogs.

**Line 209** Smyrna was in the news, and was of topical (current) interest when *The Waste Land* was being written. In May, 1919, Smyrna was occupied by the Greek army, but was recaptured by the Turks in 1922.

**Lines 243-6** In these three lines, Eliot refers to the bisexuality of Tiresias and to his role in two masterpieces of Greek poetry, *Oedipus Rex* ( a play) of Sophocles and the *Odyssey* (an epic) of Homer. In both the classics, he is shown to be a blind visionary with prophecy powers. But, then, he is also linked with the Roman Sibyls, women who could predict the future events.

**Check Your Progress 1**

(a) Write a short note on the relevance of Eliot's repetition of Edmund Spenser's line, 'Sweet Thames run softly till I end my song.'

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(b) What do you know about Eliot's 'Unreal City'?

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### 47.3 IV DEATH BY WATER

'Death by Water' is a revised version of the last seven lines of a French poem, 'Dans le Restaurant', that Eliot wrote in May-June, 1981. This part of *The Waste Land* refers to the various associated connections of water with mortality and the theme of death by drowning. It has links with the drowned god of the fertility cults, the shipwreck in *The Tempest* of Shakespeare, and with the death of Ophelia in *Hamlet*. In ancient Egypt, the yearly ritual of the god's head being thrown into the Nile was an enactment of the death and resurrection of the god. The Bengali Hindus follow the same ritual on the tenth day of the Durga Puja Festival in October when they immerse decorated images of the goddess in the Hoogly, the sea, or the nearest river. In Maharashtra, the same practice is observed on Ganesh Chaturthi (the fourth day of the bright fortnight in September) when the images of the Elephant God after ritual puja are taken out to the sea or the nearest watering place accompanied by a procession of devotees singing and dancing all the way to the chosen spot. In Eliot's poem, the emphasis is on death, and not on the hope of rebirth into a new life. Perhaps there is also an allusion to the Christian sacrament of baptism, at which the holy water becomes an agent of death of the old self and rebirth of the spirit.

#### 47.3.1 Glossary

<b>Gulls</b>	:	large sea-birds that haunt the sea coasts.
<b>Whirlpool</b>	:	current of water moving in a circle
<b>Gentile</b>	:	non-Jewish person such as a Christian
<b>Wheel</b>	:	the steering wheel of a ship
<b>Windward</b>	:	the side of the ship from which the wind blows.

#### 47.3.2 Interpretation and Critical Comments

**Lines 312-21** Phlebas the Phoenician is connected with several other figures in *The Waste Land*, such as : (a) 'the drowned Phoenician Sailor' of Line 47 in part I, (b) the 'one-eyed merchant', who is the Fool in the Tarot cards of Line 52, and (c) Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant of line 209 in part III. Since he is already dead, there is no question of remembering the cry of the sea gulls, the movement of the deep sea, and any matters concerning profit and loss, which were his everyday business while he was alive.

An undersea current gently disturbs the bones of Phlebas. His bones rise and fall suggesting the different stages of his youth and old age while he was living. Lines 315-16 recall Alonso's words in *The Tempest*, where he thinks that his son, Ferdinand, is perhaps dead. The narrator of the poem next addresses the pilot (of a hypothetical ship) who turns the wheel that controls the direction of the ship. The pilot is asked to ponder over the fate of Phlebas who was once handsome and tall like the former. The phrase, 'Gentile or Jew', is an

evocation to all mankind, of non-Jewish or Jewish origins. 'The wheel' could also be taken as the wheel of fortune in the Tarot pack. The last line in this passage has a link with *Philebus*, a dialogue of Plato (Greek philosopher of 5th century BC). There Socrates, the Greek philosopher and teacher of Plato, refers to 'People who think themselves taller and more handsome and physically finer.... than they really are'. In saying so, Socrates is actually commenting on self-deception.

**Check Your Progress 2**

(a) What is the significance of the title, 'Death by Water'?

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(b) What does Phlebas the Phoenician Sailor represent in the overall context of *The Waste Land*?

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**47.4 V. WHAT THE THUNDER SAID**

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Eliot thought that the fifth and last part of *The Waste Land*, entitled 'What the Thunder said', was not only the best part, but the only part that justified the whole [poem]'. In the first section of part V, three themes are introduced: the journey to Emmaus (a village near Jerusalem), the approach to the Chapel Perilous, the present decay of Eastern Europe. The story of the journey to Emmaus occurs in the New Testament, Luke XXIV, 13-31. Two disciples of Jesus Christ were travelling on the road to the village after his crucifixion and discussing the events of the past few days. Christ, just risen from the grave, joins them and explains to them how his death and resurrection were in full accord with the divine plan. The disciples do not recognise Christ until he blesses their evening meal, and then he disappears from the scene. The approach to the Chapel Perilous is the final stage of the quest for the Holy Grail (the cup used by Christ at his last supper with his disciples). The decay of Eastern Europe is a reference to the Red (communist) Revolution of Russia under the Czars in November, 1917, with the refugees fleeing to West Europe. None of these themes is resolved in 'What the Thunder said', the three journeys merge here but remain inconclusive.

**47.4.1 Glossary**

- frosty                      cold in the winter frost.
- reverberation            Resounding echo
- carious                    decayed with cavities
- sterile thunder          only the sound of thunder but no fruitful rain

pragmatic reality. In France, symbolist suggestiveness was contested by the Parnassian School of poetry with its emphasis on precise and economical description, of clinical self-observation.

The drive towards hard precision and clarity which represents perhaps the most decisive break with traditional poetic diction found expression above all in Imagism just before World War I. Accuracy, concreteness, and unadorned economy characterised the direct presentation of the objective world without discursive reflection. To this project an evocative dimension was added not only by symbolism but also by impressionism which loosened or dissolved an object into a group of impressions. The modern poet was thereby able to render the passage and dissolution of impressions so distinctive to the new, unsettling experience of the modern megalopolis, of rootless and heterogeneous cosmopolitan culture. Juxtaposing impressions or images apparently disconnected, the poet learnt from the arrangement of multiple planes in sculpture or movements in music the fundamental technique of discontinuous composition. This is how modernism held up a faithful mirror to fragmented reality and in doing so, produced an open *gestalt* or transformed, indeterminate structure of coherence. *The Waste Land* may be a mimesis of the heap of broken images that modern European civilization has been reduced to but the final effect, that is, the poem, remains a mastery of fragmentation.

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### 42.3 THE GEORGIANS AND THE WAR POETS

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The colloquial accents and unsentimental economy of Eliot and the later Yeats were, as we have already seen, anticipated at the turn of the century. These features are discernible even among the more conservative Georgian poets at the time of the First World War, although the excesses and exoticisms of decadence as well as the discontinuities of impressionism are absent. These poets include Rupert Brooke and Edward Thomas. Brooke was the most popular and typically Georgian who, somewhat ironically, began as a rebel against Victorian gentility with its fondness for vapid sweetness. But like many of his contemporaries, he could not break out of the orderly bounds of liberal humanism. Edward Thomas's strength lay in nature poetry, which he started to write on the encouragement of Robert Frost. Somewhat like Frost, Thomas meditates on a natural scene and using a plain and direct idiom, creates the effect of a questioning honesty resisting all temptations to abstract conceptual finality. Such a modernity of temperament was reinforced by a certain casual and homely intonation. The American Robert Frost's public image of a Yankee farmer-poet is not entirely unjustified: he turned against the Romantic tradition by choosing the localized authenticity of rural New England. Although the reader may miss in his or Thomas's work the impact of modern psychology, science, and politics, their use of the spoken language has been rightly admired for its unmistakable modernity. Frost in particular was eminently successful in creating and modulating a fictional speaking voice.

The trauma of the First World War was first expressed by poets in the trenches challenging patriotic and military humbug; it then coloured the sensibility of an entire age. The later war poets like Siegfried Sassoon, Isaac Rosenberg, and Wilfred Owen increasingly saw the War as organized and motivated insanity: their poetry bore witness to the ugly truth seen through the eyes of the common soldier. In Sassoon, war encouraged a direct, colloquial vigour to reinforce the gruesome imagery, anger, and ridicule. Both Sassoon and Owen used realism in order to shock readers out of their complacency and expose the naked reality of dehumanized violence. After the war, Sassoon's poetry acquired an ironic quality through an unsettled juxtaposition of viewpoints. Owen, despite his unparalleled mastery of realistic detail, achieved a truly complex, sometimes visionary detachment and distancing. Isaac Rosenberg also attempted this imaginative distancing and often used a rapid succession of images. Thus we can see that war poetry prepared the ground for the Modernist poetry of the 1920s.

<b>snarl</b>	threatening noise like that made by an aggressive animal
<b>mud cracked</b>	mud-houses with cracks on the surface due to dry heat
<b>cicada</b>	chirping insect resembling a grasshopper
<b>hermit thrush</b>	a song-bird that frequents lonely places
<b>Gliding</b>	moving along noiselessly
<b>mantle</b>	cloak
<b>lamentation</b>	expression of grief
<b>hordes</b>	crowds
<b>Ringed</b>	surrounded
<b>Jerusalem</b>	city in Palestine (modern Israel) where the tomb of Christ is situated. It is a place equally sacred to the Jews, Christians and Mohammedans.
<b>Athens</b>	capital city of Greece, centre of ancient Greek culture
<b>Alexandria</b>	port city of Egypt founded by Alexander the Great of Macedonia (in ancient Greece)
<b>Vienna</b>	capital of Austria, centre of art and music
<b>reminiscent</b>	that which reminds us of something
<b>cisterns</b>	tanks for storing water
<b>tumbled</b>	irregular, overthrown
<b>chapel</b>	place other than a Church used for Christian worship
<b>roof tree</b>	the main beam supporting the ridge of the roof
<b>Coco rito</b>	cock's crowning signal at dawn
<b>Himavant</b>	Sanskrit name for the Himalaya mountain
<b>humbped</b>	hung over
<b>Datta</b>	Sanskrit for 'to give' or 'given'
<b>prudence</b>	worldly wisdom
<b>retract</b>	reverse, withdraw
<b>obituaries</b>	notices of death
<b>solicitor</b>	lawyer who advises clients
<b>Dayadhvam</b>	to be compassionate
<b>aethereal</b>	airy, baseless

<b>Cariolanus</b>	the Roman general in Shakespeare's play of the same
<b>Dumyata</b>	self-control
<b>arid</b>	dry, parched
<b>Poi..affina</b>	'-be mindful in due time of my pain.' Quoted from Dante's <i>Purgatorio</i> xxvi, 145-8.
<b>Quando ... Chelidon:</b>	'When shall I become as the swallow?'
<b>Le Prince ... abolie</b>	The Prince Aquitaine of the ruined tower
<b>shore</b>	propped or supported with wooden pillars
<b>lle</b>	I shall
<b>Hieronymo</b>	character in the <i>Spanish Tragedy</i> of Thomas Kyd (1557-95)
<b>Shantih</b>	Sanskrit for 'peace'

#### 47.4.2 Interpretation

**Lines 322-30** This passage recalls the chain of events from the betrayal (by Judas Iscariot, an early disciple) and arrest of Jesus Christ, after the night of agony and prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, up to the time of his crucifixion. Judas, along with a group of soldiers and men from the Jewish priests, came to the garden with lanterns, torches and weapons. Christ was arrested and taken to the palace of the High Priest, where he was openly questioned before being taken to the Hall of Judgement, where Pilate the Roman governor of Palestine was awaiting him. On the day of Christ's crucifixion, there was a terrible earthquake. His death meant a kind a universal death for all. 'Patience' of line 30 is the key-word in this passage since it signifies the suffering of the living humanity after Christ was no more. It also denotes the agony of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind.

**Lines 331-58** Eliot thought these twenty-eight lines of the water-dripping song to be the only good lines in *The Waste Land*, and hence immortal compared to the transitoriness of the rest of the poem. He believed that the less realistic literature was, the more visual it must be. In order to be seen, dreams must be real, or at least seem to be so. In this passage, clear visual images, and sounds that artistically convey the sense of the words, create hypnotizing recitative rhythms to achieve an unusual effect. The evocative suggestion is one of an arid and waterless rocky region, a virtual wasteland or desert, where there is no hope of regeneration and life. This God-forsaken land would be transformed if only there were some water somewhere. The repetition of certain key-words like 'rock' and 'water' only heighten the general atmosphere of dryness and sterility.

There is no water in this land, only rocks and a winding sandy road which goes up among the dry and bare mountains. If only there were water, the travellers on the road would gladly stop to drink. But, for want of that, they can neither stop to rest nor think of what to do. The heat of the sand underfoot dries their sweat. The rock is like the cavity-filled mouth of the mountain that does not spit (or yield) any water. This is no place to rest and refresh oneself. The dry mountains are not silent but echoing with the sound of rainless

thunder. There is not even the solace of solitude, since the ominous faces of the dwellers of this wasteland glare at the pedestrian travellers from the doors of cracked mud-houses. So what the narrator of the poem repeatedly asks for is only some water without rock, and, if that were not possible, let it be rock with a little water. He desperately craves for a spring, a pool among the rocks. What he asks for is the sound of water only, not that of the dry grass or the cicada. Above all sounds, he cares for the sound of water flowing over a rock, surrounded by the pine trees and the song of the hermit-thrush. But, unfortunately, his eager ears do not hear the 'drip drop drip drop' sound of water.

**Lines 359-65** Here we have a change of scene. We have to imagine ourselves watching the progress of the two followers of Christ on the road to Emmaus near Jerusalem. One asks the other about the shadowy presence of a third person, dressed in a hooded brown cloak, silently walking by their side. He is not sure if it is a man or woman, but who could it be! Obviously, the cloaked figure is that of Christ risen from the grave.

**Line 366-76** Eliot, in his notes, refers to the 1920 text of *Blick ins Chaos* ('A Glimpse into Chaos') by the German writer, Herman Hesse (1872-1962). He quotes a 'Shanthy' is the formal ending to an Upanishad. Eliot's use of the Sanskrit word implies that he had to look beyond the European tradition to find a word of adequate depth and resonance.

#### 47.4.3 Critical Comments

**Line 326** Francis Bacon (1561-1626), The first English essayist, begins his essay 'Of Truth' with this line: "What is truth"? Asked jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer ". When interrogated by Pilate, Christ is reported to have told him that whatever he preached was only truth. Pilate made the remarks quoted above, and ceremoniously washed his hands of the whole affair. He walked out of the Hall of Judgement after handing Christ over to the Jewish High priest, who condemned him to death by crucifixion under the Jewish law. Incidentally, *Jesting Pilate* is the title of a book by Aldous Huxley, a popular British writer of the twentieth Century.

**Line 353** The cicadas frequent the willow groves of Kashmir, where their shrill high-pitched noise in chorus could be heard throughout the day in summer and autumn. They are also found in other Asian countries like Japan.

**Lines 366-70** (a) Herman Hesse is also the author of a novel called *Siddartha*, based on the Indian theme of how and when Buddhism as a faith started in India. A picture was made in English on this novel with Ashish Kapoor and Simi Grewal in the lead roles. (b) Nasir-ud-Din Babar was a Muslim descendent of the Mongols of Central Asia. He established the rule of the Mughal dynasty in Delhi, which lasted for nearly 250 years. Kublai Khan of S.T. Coleridge's poem 'Kubla Khan' was a Mongol King in a part of China, which is now known as Mongolia.

**Line 395** Eliot uses the Sanskrit name for the river, commonly known in India, but not the anglicized term 'the Ganges'.

'Himavant', again is the Sanskrit name of the high snowcovered Himalayan mountain range. The literal meaning of the word is 'snowbound'.

played upon with a bow like the strings of a violin? The tolling bells are the church bells of London and of the 'failing towers' of other capital cities of the countries of three continents surrounding the Mediterranean sea on three sides. There is also a reference to Browning's poem, 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came.' In his Clarke Lectures of 1926, Eliot praises this poem for achieving the stet of a double world, whereby the character's words and deeds seem to belong to another plane of reality, from which he is in exile. The background of 'What the Thunder said' resembles the dream-like world of Browning's poem, the narrative of which too is in the form of a quest. In the Old Testament, the empty cistern and wells signified the loss of faith and the worship of false gods.

**Lines 385-394** Suddenly, we are confronted with a scene that is a contrast to the earlier desert-like desolation. There is an empty place of worship, without doors and windows. The wind comes and goes through it as it likes. But in this deserted small gap in the mountains, the grass is singing over a graveyard in the faint moonlight. The dry bones of the graves can cause no harm. A cock stands on the roof tree of the chapel, crowing, 'Co co rico co co rico' in the flash of lightning. Soon after a damp gust of wind brings welcome rain. The cock is connected with the betrayal of Christ. After his arrest by the soldiers of Pilate, the Roman governor of Palestine, one of his first disciples, Peter, thrice denies that he knows him. The cock crows after the third denial. Peter then remembers what his master had previously said to him, 'Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.' (Matthew xxvi, 69-75). The crowing of the cock in Eliot's poem marks the moment of Peter's recognition of his betrayal of Christ. The cock, however, is a bird of good omen since it announces the morning, when the evil sprits, and ghosts, that walk the earth by night, are dispersed. Eliot's reproduction of the cock's crowing is the French equivalent of the English 'cock-a-doodle-do'. What follows this passage is an echo of the message of the *Bhagvad Gita* and the Hindu *Upnishads*.

**Lines 395-409** The poet suddenly has thoughts of the River Ganga (Ganges) and its land, India. In the heat of the summer, while the river was almost dry and the lifeless leaves of the trees on the banks awaited the rain, the dark clouds gathered over the Himalayas, and the forests waited in silence. At that time, the thunder in terms of the message of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* V, 2. The threefold offspring of Brahma, the Creator in Hindu mythology, i.e., men, gods and demons, approach him after finishing their formal education. To each group, he says only one syllable, 'DA', and they interpret it according to their separate ways of thinking. The men interpret it as *datta*, which means 'to give'. The demons interpret it as *dayadhvam*, which means 'to be compassionate'. The gods interpret it as *damyata*, which means 'to control oneself'. When the three groups express what they understand by 'DA', Brahma responds with *Om*, which signifies that they have understood him. The thunder in heaven repeats that very message. *DA, DA, DA*, i.e., give to the needy, be compassionate, exercise self-control. One should practise this very three-fold advice, and that is how Dr. S. Radhakrishnan interprets the fable in the *Principal Upanishads* (London Allen and Unwin, 21953, pp. 289-90). The fable concludes by asking men to practise all the

three commands for there are no gods or demons other than men. Eliot adopts this very interpretation, and lends to it his own meaning.

Hence, the poet asks, 'What have we given?' Sometimes, like Peter, with a palpitating heart, we surrender to a momentary weakness, which the wisdom of experience cannot reverse. Our acts of giving might not be recorded in the obituaries, memorials or wills the seals of which shall be broken by the lawyers after our death. But, by those very acts of charity have we lived, and shall be remembered by the posterity.

**Lines 410-22** Eliot says that in this world we are like prisoners in a locked cell. The key in the lock turned only once, and that is when we are truly compassionate towards the underprivileged. To remember the key is a confirmation of our worldly imprisoned state. Perhaps only at nightfall do we remember our true state like Coriolanus, the Shakespearean hero who was a prisoner of his own conscience, and eventually perished for his own past misdeeds of arrogance and want of compassion. As for *damyata*, Eliot translates the word as 'control' when the more accurate rendering would be 'restrain' or 'control yourselves'. However, the emphasis in this third command of the thunder is on self-control or self-restraint. The image that the poet evokes in support of the Upanishdic idea is that of a boat, well-equipped with sail and/or, and which responds to the hand of the helmsman who controls its movement. When the mind is like a calm sea, the heart of an individual (like the boat) would easily respond to the guiding hand of the captain (call him god if you so like).

**Lines 423-33** In his notes, Eliot refers to the chapter on the Fisher King in Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*. The ruler of the wasteland is sitting upon the shore, fishing, with the desert behind him, and is pondering over the question if he should set his lands in order. The falling of the London Bridge, a historical monument of the capital of the British Empire, is a startling event that foreshadows not only the decline of Europe but also the winding up of the Empire. )

Procne, the wife of King Tereus, was transformed into a swallow, and Philomela, her sister raped by Tereus, into a nightingale. In his notes, Eliot refers to Philomela as mentioned in part II (lines 99 - 103) and part III (lines 203 - 6) of *The Waste Land*. There is also an echo of Tennyson's poem ('O Swallow, Swallow, if i could follow...') to evoke a yearning for release and transformation, together with a realization of its impossibility. 'The Prince of Aquitaine, of the ruined tower' is a line from the sonnet 'El Desdichado' (The Disinherited) by Gerard de Nerval (1808-55). The medieval concept of courtly love, which deeply influenced later European lyrical poetry, first appeared in the minstrel poetry of France. Physical passion is neutralized in the cult of courtly love. The 'ruined tower' is linked with the earlier images of falling towers, and again signifies the disintegration of civilization and of the self. One of the cards in the Tarot pack is the tower struck by lightning.

In his note to line 431, Eliot refers to *The Spanish Tragedy* of Thomas Kyd (1557 - 95), subtitled 'Hieronymo is Mad Again'. Hieronymo, mad with grief over the murder of his son, plans the destruction of the murderers. His answer to the suggestion of writing a play is double-edged, meaning that he will write something suitable for the occasion, and that he will punish the murderers fittingly. Hieronymo's play is composed of fragments of poetry in unknown





Dialect of the Tribe' in A.D. Moody, ed. *The Waste Land in Different Voices*; London : Edwin Arnold, 1974, p. 14) says that the final benediction of Eliot may be read 'as reflecting the peace of enlightenment, or as indicating no more than exhausted subsidence [or falling ] into a consolatory formula, a termination rather than an ending.' If it is not Eliot's greatest poem, *The Waste Land* is certainly his most influential work. The generation of English poets that grew in the years immediately after the First World War absorbed the poem so that it became a part of their mental set up. The depth and violence of the contrasts of themes, the sense that the poet wrestling with the problem within and outside his mind is stronger here than in Eliot's later poetry. Even in his commonly acknowledged great work, *The Four Quartets*, one does not feel that philosophy and everyday life have been brought so together as in *The Waste Land*.

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## 47.6 LET US SUM UP

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As in the previous Unit in this Block, here too we have systematically done our job of explaining to you the text of the remaining three parts of *The Waste Land* of T.S. Eliot: III. 'The Fire Sermon', IV. 'Death by Water', and V. 'What the Thunder said'. After a brief introduction to each part, we provide for you a useful glossary so that you do not have to depend too much on a dictionary of the English language. Next, we give you the detailed interpretation and analysis of each part. This is so exhaustive that you would not have to look for a critical work or help-book for a thorough understanding of the text of the poem. Almost all the literary, mythical and biblical allusions have been explained, as far as possible within the scope of this Unit, to make it easy for you to unravel the many layers of meaning that Eliot's complex and multi-dimensional poem possesses. In case, we have missed some indirect references into the interpretation, we provide additional information on each part of the poem under a separate subsection called 'Critical Comments' That should help you in tackling explanations with reference to the context and other textual questions on the poem in the examination . We round off our painstaking effort with a 'Conclusion' that hints at the significance of studying this epoch-making poem of T.S. Eliot as a representative work of modern English literature, which is an important part of your post-graduate syllabus at IGNOU. As usual, the critical interpretation of each part of the poem is followed by 'Check Your Progress' exercises, the hints and answers to which are provided at the end of the Unit.

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## 47.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- (a) This Line is a deliberate repetition of the refrain from 'Prothalamion', a lyrical poem by Edmund Spenser, the late sixteenth century English poet of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. That poem is about a double marriage celebration of the aristocracy in London at which Spenser was an honoured guest. While he writes imaginatively of the two weddings, he also lovingly describes the towers of the city of London and the boat procession of the two bride-grooms on the River Thames. Hence the refrain, 'Sweet Thames run softly till I end my song.' Eliot's repetition of this line expresses his own admiration of the beauty and grandeur of the river that flows through London, one of the great historical and metropolitan cities of Europe.
- (b) Please refer to 47.2.1 'Interpretation', lines 207-14.

### Check Your Progress 2

- (a) Please refer to 47.3.
- (b) Please refer to 47.3.2 'Interpretation and Critical Comments', lines 312-21.

### Check Your Progress 3

- (a) These four lines have been taken from 'What the Thunder said', the fifth and last part of *The Waste Land* of T.S. Eliot, who regards this as the best part of that widely influential poem in the history of English literature. According to him the last part justifies the whole poem. The lines under reference relate to the journey to Emmaus (a village near Jerusalem in ancient Palestine) undertaken by two disciples of Jesus Christ soon after his crucifixion.

Though there are only two of them walking together, one notices the shadowy presence of a third figure by the side of his companion. Hence he asks him about the identity of the additional person. The third figure moves along softly, entirely covered by a hooded brown cloak, which makes it difficult to say whether it is a man or woman. The doubt in his mind makes the disciple repeat his question regarding the third, shadowy, figure moving on the road along with them.

This passage hints at the resurrection of Christ, who joins these two disciples on their journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus even before the other disciples come to know about Christ's rising from the grave for the good of mankind.

- (b) *Datta* means 'give in charity' to the needy and the poor. It is an appeal to the charitable instincts of an individual. *Dayadhvam* means 'be compassionate' to the people in misery and helplessness. It is an appeal to the emotions of pity and compassion in a person. *Damyata* means 'contract yourself' in the world full of temptations. It is an appeal that exhorts one to exercise self-control in order to live at peace with others.

### Additions to I.5 ANNOTATED READING LIST

#### I. Works of T.S. Eliot:

1. 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'; an interesting early poem from *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969). Here Eliot writes with a touch of irony about the fashionable London society of the time he came over from America to settle down in England. In this poem, one finds him experimenting with the language and form of the English verse, the improved version of which is found in *The Waste Land* and the culmination in *Four Quartets*. Some of the favourite images of Eliot, such as that of London under a brown fog, appear for the first time in 'The Love Song'.
2. Essays on 'Hamlet' and 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1928; repeated 1976). In the essay on 'Hamlet', Eliot puts forward his theory of the 'objective correlative', by which he means a set of images and patterns that tend to recur in the work of a writer, thereby achieving a unity of structure in that work. The other essay is known for its theory of how a writer works within an accepted tradition and yet maintains his individuality as a literary artist.

### ADAM'S CURSE

We sat together at one summer's end,  
That beautiful mild woman, your close friend,  
And you and I, and talked of poetry.  
I said, 'A line will take us hours maybe;  
Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought,  
Our stitching and unstitching has been naught.

Better go down upon your marrow-bones  
And scrub a kitchen pavement, or break stones  
Like an old pauper, in all kinds of weather;  
For to articulate sweet sounds together  
Is to work harder than all these, and yet  
Be thought an idler by the noisy set  
Of bankers, schoolmasters, and clergymen  
The martyrs call the world.'

And thereupon  
That beautiful mild woman for whose sake  
There's many a one shall find out all heartache  
On finding that her voice is sweet and low  
Replied, 'To be born woman is to know—  
Although they do not talk of it at school—  
That we must labour to be beautiful.'

I said, 'It's certain there is no fine thing  
Since Adam's fall but needs much labouring.  
There have been lovers who thought love should be  
So much compounded of high courtesy  
That they would sigh and quote with learned looks  
Precedents out of beautiful old books;  
Yet now it seems an idle trade enough.'

We sat grown quiet at the name of love;  
We saw the last embers of daylight die,  
And in the trembling blue-green of the sky  
A moon, worn as if it had been a shell  
Washed by time's waters as they rose and fell  
About the stars and broke in days and years.

I had a thought for no one's but your ears:  
That you were beautiful, and that I strove  
To love you in the old high way of love;  
That it had all seemed happy, and yet we'd grown  
As weary-hearted as that hollow moon.

## NO SECOND TROY

Why should I blame her that she filled my days  
With misery, or that she would of late  
Have taught to ignorant men most violent ways,  
Or hurled the little streets upon the great,  
Had they but courage equal to desire?  
What could have made her peaceful with a mind  
That nobleness made simple as a fire,  
With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind  
That is not natural in an age like this,  
Being high and solitary and most stern?  
Why, what could she have done, being what she is?  
Was there another Troy for her to burn?

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## 42.4 IMAGISM

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Both in subject matter and form, modern American poetry was more innovative than British. While free verse (*vers libre*) did not last as a vogue, the technique of impressionistic juxtaposition without the links of smooth transition had a much longer life in Ezra Pound, and above all, in T.S. Eliot. Support came not only from the new insights of psychology and psychoanalysis but from the larger mood of a disintegrating civilization. The technique of discontinuous composition was highlighted in Imagism, particularly under the aegis of Pound who no doubt took his cue from T.E. Hulme and Ford Madox Ford. Hulme, in his *Speculations*, not only set out a philosophical basis for rejection of Romantic sentimental meliorism but appended some imagistic fragments as aesthetic equivalents of a new, austere classicism. A threefold Imagistic manifesto was announced in the magazine *Poetry* in March 1913: (i) direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective (ii) scrupulous avoidance of any word that did not contribute to the presentation (iii) rhythmical composition in the sequence of the musical phrase, not of a metronome.

Among the poets originally grouped as Imagist were Pound himself, Amy Lowell, H.D. Richard Aldington, and John Gould Fletcher. Soon divisions surfaced, especially between Pound and Amy Lowell; in any case, the anthologies often included poets like D.H. Lawrence and James Joyce. In the ultimate analysis, Imagism had a historical importance; it survives, variously modified, in the bloodstream of modern poetry, in the search for a hard precision and economy. Lawrence never really fitted the Imagist bill, despite his animal and flower poems, because although he valued accuracy and rhythmic freedom, he rebelled against what he perceived as the cerebral, somewhat academic impersonality of Imagist poetry. His eroticism and intensity authenticated immediate experience—the unceasing fecundity of life unharnessed of teleology—in the tradition of Walt Whitman.

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## 42.5 YEATS AND IRISH POETRY

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The Irish situation was different particularly because of the largely agrarian society and the complex history of Irish nationalism. The struggle against British colonialism not only produced political verse but extended to a search for identity through Irish history, mythology, folklore and peasant culture. The so-called 'Celtic Twilight' (actually the name of a collection of stories or sketches Yeats published in 1873) brought together poets like George Russell (AE) and Lionel Johnson along with Yeats. Its primitivism was, however, somewhat sentimental and nostalgic, and its opposition to scientific, rationalistic dogma was largely a Romantic survival. Although the poets turned away from the sunny, Southern European or Alpine landscape celebrated in Romantic poetry to authentically Celtic mists and overcast skies, the general mood was one of world-weariness and disillusionment prompting ultimately escapist journeys into a land of heart's desire, away from the joyless squalor of modern urban life.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, Irish literature consciously moved away from dreaminess to a genuine historical awareness, a passionate vigour and coarseness of experience. This reaction was the hall-mark of the Irish Dramatic Movement. Some Irish writers like John Millington Synge went to peasant life for fresh sources of poetry. George Russell's criticism of Yeats's shadowy insubstantiality was vigorously endorsed by the latter himself when he broke decisively with his earlier poetic style in *The Green Helmet* (1910) and *Responsibilities* (1914).

The poetic life of W.B. Yeats falls into two phases, earlier and later, opposed to each other and yet linked by the same longing for escape from this world. If in his early poetry, Yeats wishes to escape to a dreamy fairyland, in the later poetry the nostalgia is of the spirit, for a world of pure ideas. The poetic influence of the Pre-Raphaelites

## EASTER 1916

I have met them at close of day  
Coming with vivid faces  
From counter or desk among grey  
Eighteenth-century houses.  
I have passed with a nod of the head  
Or polite meaningless words,  
Or have lingered awhile and said  
Polite meaningless words,  
And thought before I had done  
Of a mocking tale or a gibe  
To please a companion  
Around the fire at the club,  
Being certain that they and I  
But lived where motley is worn:  
All changed, changed utterly:  
A terrible beauty is born.

That woman's days were spent  
In ignorant good-will,  
Her nights in argument  
Until her voice grew shrill.  
What voice more sweet than hers  
When, young and beautiful,  
She rode to harriers?  
This man had kept a school  
And rode our winged horse;  
This other his helper and friend  
Was coming into his force;  
He might have won fame in the end,  
So sensitive his nature seemed,  
So daring and sweet his thought.  
This other man I had dreamed  
A drunken, vainglorious lout.  
He had done most bitter wrong  
To some who are near my heart,  
Yet I number him in the song;  
He, too, has resigned his part  
In the casual comedy;  
He, too, has been changed in his turn,  
Transformed utterly:  
A terrible beauty is born.

Hearts with one purpose alone  
Through summer and winter seem  
Enchanted to a stone  
To trouble the living stream.  
The horse that comes from the road,  
The rider, the birds that range  
From cloud to tumbling cloud,  
Minute by minute they change;  
A shadow of cloud on the stream  
Changes minute by minute;  
A horse-hoof slides on the brim,  
And a horse plashes within it;  
The long-legged moor-hens dive,  
And hens to moor-cocks call;  
Minute by minute they live:  
The stone's in the midst of all.

Too long a sacrifice  
Can make a stone of the heart.  
O when may it suffice?  
That is Heaven's part, our part  
To murmur name upon name,  
As a mother names her child  
When sleep at last has come  
On limbs that had run wild.  
What is it but nightfall?  
No, no, not night but death;  
Was it needless death after all?  
For England may keep faith  
For all that is done and said.  
We know their dream; enough  
To know they dreamed and are dead;  
And what if excess of love  
Bewildered them till they died?  
I write it out in a verse--  
MacDonagh and MacBride  
And Connolly and Pearse  
Now and in time to be,  
Wherever green is worn,  
Are changed, changed utterly:  
A terrible beauty is born.

*September 25, 1916*



## SAILING TO BYZANTIUM

### I

That is no country for old men. The young  
In one another's arms, birds in the trees  
-Those dying generations- at their song,  
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,  
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long  
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.  
Caught in that sensual music all neglect  
Monuments of unageing intellect.

### II

An aged man is but a paltry thing,  
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless  
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing  
For every tatter in its mortal dress,  
Nor is there singing school but studying  
Monuments of its own magnificence;  
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come  
To the holy city of Byzantium.

### III

O sages standing in God's holy fire  
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,  
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,  
And be the singing-masters of my soul.  
Consume my heart away; sick with desire  
And fastened to a dying animal  
It knows not what it is; and gather me  
Into the artifice of eternity.

### IV

Once out of nature I shall never take  
My bodily form from any natural thing,  
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make  
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling  
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;  
Or set upon a golden bough to sing  
To lords and ladies of Byzantium  
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

1927

**LAPIS LAZULI**  
*(For Harry Clifton)*

I have heard that hysterical women say  
They are sick of the palette and fiddle-bow,  
Of poets that are always gay,  
For everybody knows or else should know  
That if nothing drastic is done  
Aeroplane and Zeppelin will come out,  
Pitch like King Billy bomb-balls in  
Until the town lie beaten flat.

All perform their tragic play,  
There struts Hamlet, there is Lear,  
That's Ophelia, that Cordelia;  
Yet they, should the last scene be there,  
The great stage curtain about to drop,  
If worthy their prominent part in the play,  
Do not break up their lines to weep.  
They know that Hamlet and Lear are gay;  
Gaiety transfiguring all that dread.  
All men have aimed at, found and lost;  
Black out; Heaven blazing into the head:  
Tragedy wrought to its uttermost.  
Though Hamlet rambles and Lear rages,  
And all the drop-scenes drop at once  
Upon a hundred thousand stages,  
It cannot grow by an inch or an ounce.

On their own feet they came, or on shipboard,  
Camel-back, horse-back, ass-back, mule-back,  
Old civilisations put to the sword.  
Then they and their wisdom went to rack:  
No handiwork of Callimachus,  
Who handled marble as if it were bronze,  
Made draperies that seemed to rise  
When sea-wind swept the corner, stands;  
His long lamp-chimney shaped like the stem  
Of a slender palm, stood but a day;  
All things fall and are built again,  
And those that build them again are gay.

Two Chinamen, behind them a third,  
Are carved in lapis lazuli,  
Over them flies a long-legged bird,  
A symbol of longevity;  
The third, doubtless a serving-man,  
Carries a musical instrument.

Every discoloration of the stone,  
Every accidental crack or dent,  
Seems a water-course or an avalanche,  
Or lofty slope where it still snows  
Though doubtless plum or cherry-branch  
Sweetens the little half-way house  
Those Chinamen climb towards, and I  
Delight to imagine them seated there;

There, on the mountain and the sky,  
On all the tragic scene they stare.  
One asks for mournful melodies;  
Accomplished fingers begin to play.  
Their eyes mid many wrinkles, their eyes,  
Their ancient, glittering eyes, are gay.

**T.S. Eliot**  
**THE WASTE LAND**  
**1922**

'Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse  
oculis meis vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum  
illi pueri dicerents : Σιβνλλα σελ ζ;  
respondebal illas? γποσανεινσελω

For Ezra Pound  
il miglior fabbro.

## I. The Burial of the Dead

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

20. What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow  
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,  
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only  
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,  
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,  
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only  
There is shadow under this red rock,  
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),  
And I will show you something different from either  
Your shadow at morning striding behind you  
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you:  
30. I will show you fear in a handful of dust,  
*Frisch weht der Wind  
Der Heimat zu  
Mein Irisch Kind  
Wo weilest du?*

'You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;  
'They called me the hyacinth girl.'  
Yet when we came back, late, from the hyacinth garden,  
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not  
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither  
40. Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,  
Looking into the heart of light, the silence  
*Oed' und leer das Meer.*

Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyante,  
Had a bad cold, nevertheless  
Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,  
With a wicked pack of cards. Here, said she,  
Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,  
(Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)  
Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,  
50. The lady of situations.  
Here is the man with three staves, and here the Wheel,  
And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card,  
Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,  
Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find

The Hanged Man. Fear death by water.  
I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.  
Thank you. If you see dear Mrs. Equitone,  
Tell her I bring the horoscope myself:  
One must be so careful these days.

60. Unreal City.

Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,  
A crown flowed over London Bridge, so many,  
I had not thought death had undone so many.  
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,  
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.  
Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,  
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours  
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.  
There I saw one I knew, and stopped him crying: 'Stetson!

70.

'You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!  
'That corpse you planted last year in your garden,  
'Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?  
'Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?  
'On keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,  
'Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!  
'You" hypocrite lecteur!- mon semblable, - mon frère!

## II. A Game of Chess

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,  
Glowed on the marble, where the glass  
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines.  
80. From which a golden Cupidon peeped out  
(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)  
Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra  
Reflecting light upon the table as  
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,  
From satin cases poured in rich profusion.  
In vials of ivory and coloured glass  
Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,  
Unguent, powdered, or liquid-troubled, confused  
And drowned the sense in odours: stirred by the air  
90. That freshened from the window, these ascended  
In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,  
Flung their smoke into the laquearia,  
Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.  
Huge sea-wood fed with copper  
Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,  
In which sad light a carved dolphin swam.  
Above the antique mantel was displayed  
As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene  
The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king  
100. So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale  
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice  
And still she cried, and still the world pursues,  
'Jug Jug' to dirty ears.  
And other withered stumps of time  
Were told upon the walls; staring forms  
Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed.  
Footsteps shuffled on the stair.  
Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair  
Spread out in fiery points  
110. Glowed into words, then would be savagely still.

'My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.  
Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.  
What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?  
I never know what you are thinking. Think.

I think we are in rats' alley  
Where the dead men lost their bones.

'What is that noise?  
The wind under the door.  
'What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?  
Nothing again nothing.  
120. 'Do  
You know nothing? Do you see nothing?  
Do you remember  
Nothing? I remember  
Those are pearls that were his eyes.  
'Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?'  
But

O O O O that Shakespherian Rag—  
It's so elegant





as well as his early interest in the occult fortified his opposition to mechanistic conceptions of the universe, an opposition that remains a common link among modern writers otherwise widely different from each other. Yeats's early poetry is characterized by somnolent rhythms, symbolist evocativeness and obscure mystic calls. What gave this mixture credibility was his peculiarly ambivalent Anglo-Irish identity: as a member of the Protestant Anglo-Norman Ascendancy, Yeats was passionately involved in Irish politics and yet distrustful of its nationalist zeal. He was no doubt drawn into politics by his unrequited love for Maud Gonne; at the same time, he remained aloof discovering a mythically resonant, tragic heroism in the futile Easter Rebellion.

The quest for identity led Yeats to resolve his own self into a dialectic, into the antithetical categories of self and soul. Socially he tried to locate himself in the declining aristocracy among the big houses and estates, ideologically bound to the peasant, the servant or the tramp against the emerging threat of a bourgeoisie that was relatively new to Ireland. Failure in love, practical experience, especially of running the Abbey Theatre and contempt for the *nouveau riche* brought in a sturdier note into his poetry chastened by bitterness and disillusionment. The discovery in himself of double selves was aided by the knowledge received at seances supposedly through the 'medium' of his wife; this knowledge grew into Yeats's philosophical system *A Vision* (1925; rev. ed. 1937). Here, as elsewhere, we encounter the central symbolism of interpenetrating gyres or cones and the phases of the moon. Along with the doctrine of the Mask, these metaphors enabled Yeats to impose a certain pattern or order on the history of Western civilization somewhat in the manner of Spengler.

Yeats's pursuit of a world of pure ideas, a Byzantine abstraction-monuments of unageing intellect—was anchored in the concrete vitality of the imagination. Thus his poetry dramatises the fundamental dichotomy of the flesh and the spirit on different levels: as a result, a dispassionately cold style unleashes passionate intensity by virtue of its magisterial control. From *The Tower* (1928) onwards, Yeats's system of opposed personae or split selves is largely unburdened of its occult trappings: it is as though in his last poems Yeats rises above his system to the existential conflict between affirmation and renunciation, art and nature, passion and conquest, old age and the disturbing promptings of the flesh.

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## 42.6 MODERNISM, EZRA POUND AND T.S. ELIOT

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The High Modernist mode popular in British and American poetry from the early 1920s to the 1950s was of course dominated by Pound and Eliot. Modernist poetry was characterised by a prodigious appetite for assimilating the disparate and fragmentary experiences of a complex and heterogeneous civilization. Fin-de-siècle formalism and aestheticism, impressionism, symbolism and imagism all combined to produce the modernist mode. While we have to wait till the thirties for the poetry of political commitment, the impact of discoveries in psychology and anthropology are clearly discernible. Poetry attempted to explore the new territory of the irrational and associative surge of consciousness, neurosis, dream, and the Collective Unconscious with its storehouse of myth and archetype. This is why the poets adopted what has been described above (42.2) as the technique of discontinuous composition.

Pound's wide and disparate reading extended the range of modern poetry, especially in his intertextual use of literary traditions. Poetry, as he believed, must be as well written as prose. By 1911, his poetic idiom was relatively stripped of 'poetic diction': his syntax became more direct and natural. Apart from compression and excision, Pound concentrated on images against the uninspired abstractness of language. His Vorticism, as a movement, was a continuation of Imagism and its dynamic interplay of images. He moved to a non-mimetic model of the Image, a form produced by an emotional energy, a cluster, an arrangement of planes as in sculpture. After the War and the economic difficulties he went through, in *Homage to Sextus Propertius*

### III. The Fire Sermon

The river's tent is broken; the last fingers of leaf  
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind  
Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are  
departed.

Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.  
The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,  
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends  
Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are  
departed.

180. And their friends, the loitering heirs of City directors;  
Departed, have left no addresses.  
By the waters of Lemn I sat down and wept...  
Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song.  
Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.  
But at my back in a cold blast I hear  
The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.

- A rat crept softly through the vegetation  
Dragging its slimy belly on the bank  
While I was fishing in the dull canal  
190. On a winter evening round behind the gashouse  
Musing upon the king my brother's wreck  
And on the king my father's death before him,  
White bodies naked on the low damp ground  
And bones cast in a little low dry garret,  
Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.  
But at my back from time to time I hear  
The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring  
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.  
O the 'moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter,  
200. And on her daughter  
They wash their feet in soda water  
*Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!*

Twit twit twit  
Jug jug jug jug jug jug  
So rudely forc'd.  
Tereu

#### Unreal City

210. Under the brown fog of a winter noon  
Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant  
Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants  
C.i.f. London: documents at sight,  
Asked me in demotic French  
To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel  
Followed by a weekend at the Metropole.

- At the violet hour, when the eyes and back  
Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits  
Like a taxi throbbing waiting,  
I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,  
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see  
220. At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives  
Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,

- The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights  
 Her stove, and lays out food in tins.  
 Out of the window perilously spread  
 Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,  
 On the divan are piled (at night her bed)  
 Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.  
 I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs  
 Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest-
230. I too awaited the expected guest.  
 He, the young man carbuncular, arrives,  
 A small house agent's clerk, with one bold stare,  
 One of the low on whom assurance sits  
 As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.  
 The time is now propitious, as he guesses,  
 The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,  
 Endeavours to engage her in caresses  
 Which still are unreproved, if undesired.  
 Flushed and decided, he assaults at once:
240. Exploring hands encounter no defence;  
 His vanity requires no response,  
 And makes a welcome of indifference.  
 (And I Tiresias have foresuffered all  
 Enacted on this same divan or bed;  
 I who have sat by Thebes below the wall  
 And walked among the lowest of the dead.)  
 Bestows one final patronising kiss,  
 And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit...

She turns and looks a moment in the glass

250. Hardly aware of her departed lover;  
 Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass;  
 'Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over'  
 When lovely woman stoops to folly and  
 Paces about her room again, alone,  
 She smooths her hair with automatic hand,  
 And puts a record on the gramophone.

- 'This music crept by me upon the waters'  
 And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.  
 O City city, I can sometimes hear
260. Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,  
 The pleasant whining of a mandoline  
 And a clatter and chatter from within  
 Where fishmen lounge at noon; where the walls  
 Of Magnus Martyr hold  
 Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.

The river sweats  
 Oil and tar  
 The barges drift  
 With the turning tide

270. Red sails  
 Wide  
 To leeward, swing on the heavy spar.  
 The barges wash  
 Drifting logs  
 Down Greenwich reach

Past the Isle of Dogs.

Weialala leia  
Wallala leialala

280. Elizabeth and Leicester  
Beating oars  
The stern was formed  
A gilded shell  
Red and gold  
The brisk swell  
Rippled both shores  
Southwest wind  
Carried down stream  
The peal of bells  
White towers

290. Weialala leia  
Wallala leialala

'Trams and dusty trees.  
Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew  
Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees  
Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe.'

'My feet are at Moorgate, and my heart  
Under my feet. After the event  
He wept. He promised "a new start".  
I made no comment. What should I resent?'

300. 'On Margate Sands.  
I can connect  
Nothing with nothing.  
The broken fingernails of dirty hands.  
My people humble people who expect  
Nothing.  
la la

To Carthage then I came

310. Burning burning burning burning  
O Lord Thou pluckest me out  
O Lord Thou pluckest

burning

*IV. Death by Water*

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,  
Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell  
And the profit and loss.

A current under sea  
Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell  
He passed the stages of his age and youth  
Entering the whirlpool.

Gentile or Jew  
320. O you who turn the wheel and look to windward.  
Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as  
You.

V. *What the Thunder said*

After the torchlight red on sweaty faces  
After the frosty silence in the gardens  
After the agony in stony places  
The shouting and the crying  
Prison and palace and reverberation  
Of thunder of spring over distant mountains  
He who was living is now dead  
We who were living are now dying  
330. With a little patience

Here is no water but only rock  
Rock and no water and the sandy road  
The road winding above among the mountains  
Which are mountains of rock without water  
If there were water we should stop and drink  
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think  
Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand  
If there were only water amongst the rock  
Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit  
340. Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit  
There is not even silence in the mountains  
But dry sterile thunder without rain  
There is not even solitude in the mountains  
But red sullen faces sneer and snarl  
From doors of mudcracked houses  
If there were water

And no rock  
If there were rock  
And also water  
And water

350. A spring  
A pool among the rock  
If there were the sound of water only  
Not the cicada  
And dry grass singing  
But sound of water over a rock  
Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees  
Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop  
But there is no water

360. Who is the third who walks always beside you?  
When I count, there are only you and I together  
But when I look ahead up the white road  
There is always another one walking beside you  
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded  
I do not know whether a man or a woman  
-But who is that on the other side of you?

370. What is that sound high in the air  
Murmur of maternal lamentation  
Who are those hooded hordes swarming  
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth  
Ringed by the flat horizon only  
What is the city over the mountains

Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air  
Falling towers  
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria  
Vienna London  
Unreal

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

390. In this decayed hole among the mountains  
In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing  
Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel  
There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.  
It has no windows, and the door swings,  
Dry bones can harm no one.  
Only a cock stood on the roof tree  
Co co rico co co rico  
In a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust  
Bringing rain

400. Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves  
Waited for rain, while the black clouds  
Gathered far distant, over Himavant.  
The jungle crouched, humped in silence.  
Then spoke the thunder  
DA  
*Datta*: what have we given?  
My friend, blood shaking my heart  
The awful daring of a moment's surrender  
Which an age of prudence can never retract  
By this, and this only, we have existed  
Which is not to be found in our obituaries  
Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider  
Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor  
In our empty rooms

410. DA  
*Dayadhvam*: I have heard the key  
Turn in the door once and turn once only  
We think of the key, each in his prison  
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison  
Only at nightfall, aethereal rumours  
Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus  
DA  
*Damyata*: The boat responded  
Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar

420. The sea was calm, your heart would have responded  
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient  
To controlling hands  
I sat upon the shore  
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me  
Shall I at least set my lands in order?

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down  
*Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina*  
*Quando fiam uti chelidon—O swallow swallow*  
*Le Prince d'Aquitaine à'la tour abolie*

430. These fragments I have shored against my ruins  
Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.  
Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.  
Shantih shantih shantih