
UNIT 42 MODERN BRITISH POETRY : AN INTRODUCTION

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42.0 OBJECTIVES

Our aim in this unit is to provide a map of modern British poetry. Starting with the end of the nineteenth century it tries to give you some idea of the major movements and figures making brief references to American poetry. This larger perspective will help you to understand an individual poet or a particular tendency in terms of literary tradition and historical change.

42.1 INTRODUCTION

Putting the High Modernist mode of the 1920s in the centre this unit examines its anticipations in the late Victorian era as well as its lasting influence up to the present day. At the same time, it considers the rival tendency to recover the native English tradition wary of the Franco-American element in Modernism. Each decade seems to react against the poetic idiom of the previous one. The Irish and Welsh situations are analysed separately but always in relation to the main stream.

42.2 THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The origins of modern British poetry are not unexpectedly to be found in the poetic cross-currents and developments towards the end of the nineteenth century. Although the reigning Victorian poetic fashions and standards were challenged from diverse directions, many modern poets were indebted to Browning, Hopkins, Hardy and the late Victorian, 'fin-de-siècle' poets. When modern poetry broke with the past, the rebellion became particularly visible in the rejection of conventionally bejewelled and smooth poetic diction which could no longer articulate the raw, disturbing experience already handled in the avant-garde novel of Lawrence and Joyce. The debt of Eliot's *The Waste Land* to Joyce's *Ulysses* is well known.

The point of affinity between Browning and modern poetry is in his obscurity and irregularity of diction. While this initially may have sprung from a mind prone to rambling parentheses and therefore often became a vice, it carried Browning's imagination through a rapid succession of associations. For Eliot and the moderns, he thus linked the past, the 'Metaphysical' poets, with a poet like Hopkins. Browning's ability to create the natural articulation of a voice, which necessitated syntactical obscurity, remains a permanent legacy to modern poetry.

essential part of our personal experience. Very often, we quote him/her to ourselves, and we experience a repeat of either one or a series of emotions in a poem or other kind of literary work. In exactly the same manner, Eliot quotes his favourite writers to himself in the poems, goes over their images, phrases and metaphors, like so many possessions in the crowded storehouse of his mind. It is our sincere hope, dear student, that we are making ourselves clear to you since our chief aim is to make difficult ideas and concepts clear to you in as many words as the scope of this Unit allows. Well, so far so good; let us now pass on to the next hurdle in our effort to understand of *The Waste Land* of T. S. Eliot.

The second important point is that one must grasp Eliot's obsession with the problem of time. He writes in *Four Quartets*,

*Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past.*

The essence of this thought is that if our past can determine our present, as most philosophers and historians seem to agree upon, then our present could equally determine our future. There is also the hope that memory could bring up feelings and incidents of long ago to render them real, so that they once again become a vital part of the present. Thus, when Eliot alludes to the Thames in *The Waste Land*, it remains the river that flows through London even now. But it is also the river on which the royalty and aristocracy of England went out in their boats centuries ago. The very name of the Thames evokes historical and personal memories, not only to those who live in London but also in far-off places, and who have never seen the Thames but read about it in English literature. Eliot's Thames is the same river that inspired Edmund Spenser (The English Poet of the sixteenth century who also wrote *Epithalamion* that you studied as part of this course in Block , Unit), Line 183 in 'The Fire Sermon'(please check in the text of the poem), 'Sweet Thames, run softly till end my song', evokes the same line of Spenser in *Prothalamion*, another of his poems.

After these introductory remarks, let us now turn our attention to the text of *The Waste Land*, the first part of which is 'The Burial of the Dead.'

46.2.1 Glossary

Lilacs	plants with fragrant purple or white flowers
Tubers	short thick rounded roots
Starnbergersee	lake near Munich in Germany
Colonnade	row of pillars
Hofgarten	park in Munich
Cricket	small brown insect resembling a grasshopper
Frisch ... du?	The wind blows fresh to the homeland. My Irish girl, where are you lingering?
Hyacinth	plant with fragrant bell-shaped flowers
Oed'...Meer	desolate and empty the sea
Clairvoyante	person with power to visualise events in the future, woman with prophesying powers
Phoenician	resident of Phoenicia (old name of Lebanon on the Eastern Mediterranean coast)
Belladonna	'beautiful lady' in Italian
Saint Mary Woolnoth	church in King William Street, London
Mylae	ancient city on the north coast of Sicily, Italy
Sprout	leaves growing out of roots, tubers or beans
Lecteur	reader in French
men semblable	my fellow-man
<i>mon frere</i>	my brother

46.2.2 Interpretation

The title of this part of *The Waste Land* is derived from the service for the burial of the dead in the Church of England as given in the Book of Common Prayer. Let us caution you at the very outset that for a full understanding of this poem, you require some knowledge of the English Bible, which is not compulsory but still desirable.

Lines 1-7 : In these lines, Eliot subverts the traditional view of spring as a season of joy and merriment. He deliberately provides an ironic contrast to the glad opening of Geoffrey Chaucer's 'General Prologue' to *The Canterbury Tales* (which you have studied in Book, Unit of this course). To Eliot, April is cruel for being the time of Good Friday, when Christ was crucified on Calvary Hill on the outskirts of Jerusalem. Yet, he hints at the resurgence of life in the wasteland through the welcome image of flowers growing out of the barren earth. The April rain revives memory and desire equally in human beings and plants. Winter ironically keeps people warm since the vegetation continues to live in the warm underground while the surface is cold with snow. The image of a little life in dry roots is a reminder of the idea of death-in-life.

Lines 8-11 : This is a reference to a shower of rain that perhaps drenched the poet and his group of tourists while boating on a lake near Munich in August, 1911. When the sunlight returned, they went into a public park where they had some coffee.

Lines 12-18: The details of this passage are perhaps taken from *My Past* (1913), an autobiographical work by Countess Marrie Larisch, a relation of the Austrian Empress Elizabeth. Valerie Eliot (the poet's second wife) writes that Eliot met the Countess somewhere, and that his description of the sledding episode comes from a conversation he had with her. This passage evokes a picture of the decadence (or corruption) of contemporary European aristocracy. The only place where Marrie feels free is in the mountains. Just to impress Eliot, she informs him that the Archduke is her cousin, she is an intellectual since she reads at night, and also she goes to the warmer south of Europe (France, Spain and Italy) in winter when it is very cold in Austria.

Lines 19-24: Here Eliot uses images from a passage in the Bible, Book of Job, viii, 11-13, 16-17, where there is mention of roots wrapped about a heap of stones. 'Son of man', is the Jewish prophet, Ezekiel, who is sent on a mission to preach God's word to the unbelieving people of Israel. The preacher reminds people of the vanity of life, and stresses the importance of remembering God in their youth before the desolation of old age sets in. It is, again, a reference to the Bible, Ecclesiastes xii, 5. The dry stone that gives no sound of water is a recurring image of death-in-life in *The Waste Land*.

Lines 25-30: These lines are virtual repetition of a passage in an early poem of Eliot, 'The Death of Saint Narcissus', which he probably wrote in 1915. The various biblical echoes in these lines are of (a) Isaiah ii, 10 (b) Isaiah xxxii, 2; (c) I Corinthians x, 3-5. Christ is described as a Spiritual Rock in the Bible, and those who did not believe in him were overthrown in the desert. The shadow of the rock provides no solace in *The Waste Land*, but reminds us of mortality (certain death). The last line in this passage is a reminder of the fear of death, of which dust is a symbol as the body inside the grave turns into dust after death. This passage supplements the previously expressed idea that the European society is decayed and disintegrated. The voice of the biblical prophet is only one of the many, in Eliot's poem, that comment on the barrenness of the wasteland.

Lines 31-42: In Greek mythology, a youth named Hyacinth was killed in an accident and a flower grew out of his blood. The flowers in this passage evoke feelings of sadness, sympathy and desire. The lines record the recollection of a passionately intense moment of romantic life. There is sad memory of the remembered joy with a

feeling of irreversible loss. To express his view forcefully, Eliot quotes from *Tristan and Isolde*, an opera of the German poet, Wagner. Thereby, he suggests not only the desolate state in his own poem but also a correspondence between the situation in the opera and that in *The Waste Land*. Eliot's use of the quotation heightens the general effect of desolation in the poem.

Lines 43 - 59 : Here, Eliot satirizes the dabbling in matters spiritual by the society ladies of his time. Ironically, he ridicules the practice of fortune - telling through the Tarot pack of cards, which were the first playing cards made in Italy in the early fourteenth century. It should be noted about Madame Sososttris, the society clairvoyante, that she has no knowledge of any spiritual matters. Hence, she cannot find in the pack the 'Hanged Man', whom Eliot associates with the hooded figure of Christ (refer to II.362-3 in part V of *The Waste Land*). She herself does not fully understand what she sees. The Phoenician Sailor was a kind of fertility god, whose image was every year thrown into the sea as a symbol of the death of summer. As per tradition, he was later reclaimed, and his resurrection meant the return of new life in spring. In section IV, he figures as Phlebas, representing not resurrection but mortality of mankind. Actually, there is on drowned sailor's picture in the Tarot pack of cards. The line, 'Those are pearls that were his eyes' is a quotation from Ariel's song in *The Tempest* of Shakespeare.

'Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks' is the image of a beautiful and seductive women who could be a source of threat to the narrator (of *The Waste Land*). She reminds us of the vampire-like figure of Mona Lisa as described by Walter Pater (the Victorian Critics) in his essay on Leonardo da Vinci (the Italian painter) in the collection entitled the *Renaissance*. The man with three staves (or sticks), a figure in the Tarot pack, is associated by Eliot with the Fisher King. The wheel (of fortune) another card, reflects the cyclic reversal of fortune in life. The one-eyed, merchant is the fool in the pack, and also linked with Mr. Eugenides, the merchant from Symrna (section III, pp.209-14). But there is no blank card in the Tarot pack; this is a deliberate mystification introduced here by the poet. 'The Hanged Man' could be an allusion to Christ on the cross. Mrs. Equitone is obviously a client of Madame Sososttris. the name carries on ironic connotation.

Lines 60-76 : Eliot himself, in his notes to the poem, refers to a poem about Paris by the French poet, Baudelaire. It is about a swarming city full of dreams. In colder climes like that of London, Paris, New York, Moscow, and Srinagar in Kashmir, the winter fog is thick in the sub-zero temperatures of December and January. The people on their way to work pass on surrounded by the thick brown fog. Eliot visualizes such a scene of people flowing over London Bridge. The exhalation of sighs from the crowd of passing humanity, recalling a similar passage in Dante's *Inferno* is an image of the tragedy of modern world. The crowd, reminiscent of the damned souls in Hell, is of the workers on their way to the city district of London, the financial nerve centre of that metropolis, of which King William Street is a part. Saint Mary Woolnoth is a church in that very street. In the 1920s, nine o'clock in the morning was the usual starting time for the workers in the city.

Stetson, just a name, does not refer to anyone in particular.' he could be any senior bank clerk in a bowler hat. The reference to the battle at Mylae (an ancient city on the coast of Sicily) in 260 BC is a comment on the continuity of the past and present: the old battle and the first world war in Eliot's own time. The 'corpse' could be a forgotten memory or the self buried in the surrounding life. The familiar idea of the dog being a friend to men is juxtaposed with the menacing image of the dog in the Old Testament (Psalms xxii, 16-20). At the end of this passage, Eliot refers to the prefatory poem of Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* (Flowers of Evil). The quotation is from 'Au Lecteur' (To the Reader): 'O hypacrite reader, my follow-man, my brother!' Eliot, by reference to Baudelaire, compels the reader to confront the vice of boredom or spiritual emptiness in order to realize how he himself is situated. After going through *The Waste Land*, the reader shares with the poet a state of deep spiritual

emptiness, something that the poem projects, among several other things, as indicated in the earlier Unit on T. S. Eliot.

46.2.3 Critical Comments

Here are a few additional critical comments to explain certain allusions in this part of *The Waste Land*.

Lines 6- 7: The image of 'feeding/A little life' is derived from 'To Our Ladies of Death,' a poem by the English poet James Thomson (1834-82). Through this allusion, Eliot suggests the dried up state of human consciousness which is reduced to a death-in-life situation.

Line 12: this comment by Marrie is quoted as a criticism of her conformity with the German idea of racial superiority in which Adolf Hitler believed.

Lines 31 -34: Eliot's note refers to *Tristan and Isolde* an opera by Richard Wagner (1813 - 83), the German poet. The quotation is a comment on the episode in the hyacinth garden.

Line 35: The hyacinths are a symbol of the resurrected god of fertility rites.

Line 42: this quotation is from the last act of *Tristan and Isolde*. Eliot perhaps quotes from the original German in order to evoke the music of the opera.

Line 46 : Eliot explains in his notes that he did not know the exact structure of the Tarot pack of cards, from which he departs to suit his own convenience.

Line 49 : Belladonna , apart from being a powerful drug, is also the name of the three fates in classified muthology.

Line 64: In his note, Eliot refers to Dante's *Inferno*, IV, 25-27.

Line 70: The Battle of Mylac was fought between the armies of Rome and Carthage in 260 BC. It provides a link between the past and present in there context of the First world war.

Line 74 : Eliot's note refers to the dirge (song of mourning) sung by Cornelia for her son in John Webster's *The While Devil*.

Check Your Progresss 1

- (a) What are the difficulties that a student faces in trying to understand *The Waste Land*?

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(b) Write a critical interpretation of ll. 1-7 of *The Burial of the Dead*.

Explain with reference to the context ll. 60 - 65.

46.3 II. A GAME OF CHESS

The title of this part of *The Waste Land* is taken from a play called *A Game of Chess* by the English dramatist, Thomas Middleton (1580 - 1627). That drama is a political allegory about the conflict between England and Spain, which extended over a prolonged period in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In the actual game of chess in Middleton's play, the white pieces represent the English, while the black pieces are the Spaniards because of their comparatively dark complexion. In *Women Beware Women*, another play by Middleton, a young woman is being seduced in the background of the stage even as a game of chess is in progress in the foreground. By choosing the title of this part of his poem, Eliot is suggesting that the relationships of men and women, as shown here, are like the moves and counter-moves in a subtle game of chess, both parties trying to overcome each other.

46.3.1 Glossary

burnished	: polished
fruited vines	: grape-vines bearing clusters of grape fruit
Cupidon	: baby Cupid, the pagon god of love
Candelabra	: large stands for candles or lamps with branches
vials	: small bottles
Unstoppered	: without caps, corks or stoppers
synthetic	: chemically prepared as against something made of natural ingredients
Unguent	: ointment or lubricant
laqueria	: a panelled ceiling
coffered	: decorated with ornamental panels
dolphin	: large sea mamal with a beak like snout
gave upon ... scene	: opened towards a forest scene
forced	: violated, seduced
'Jug Jug'	: the bird-song of the nightingale
stumps	: remnants, reminders of old times
told	: retold in the form of carvings

shuffled	: moved noisy
rat's alley	: narrow passage infested by rats
Shakespearian Rag	: This is a reference to an American regatime hit song of 1912. Rag was a style of Jazz dance music very popular at the beginning of the First World War.
demobbed	: demobilised or retired from the army
gammon	: salted or smoked piece of meat from the bottom of a pig
beauty	: charm, pleasure
Goonight	: slang expression for good night.

46.3.2 Interpretation

Lines 77-96: The first twenty lines of this part of *The Waste Land* recall the literary tradition of the Renaissance period in Europe dealing with the subject of fatal romantic passion. The artificial language and diction as well as the style of these lines satirize the mode of expression of that tradition. Eliot's note refers to the famous passage in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act II, se ii, where Enobarbus (a minor character) gives a description of the ceremonial boat of Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, and her first meeting with Mark Antony, the Roman commander. Here Eliot's style is an ironic parody(mock imitation) of what Enobarbus says in Shakespeare's play. The description of the woman at the dressing table reminds one of Belinda at her toilet in *The Rape of the Lock*, a mock-herioc poem by Alexander Pope (1688-1744). The panelled ceiling of the room invokes the banquet scene in the Latin epic, the *Aeneid* (Book I,1.726) of Virgil, the Roman poet. The banquet was given by Dido, Queen of Carthage (an ancient state on the northern coastal area of Africa), in honour of youthful and handsome Aeneas, a Roman hero in exile. Later when faithlessly deserted by Aeneas, her lover, Dido destroyed herself by burning on a funeral pyre while the Roman returned to his own land to continue his exploits. All these literary allusions are built into the text of Eliot's poem in this part of *The Waste Land*. If one does not know these allusions it is difficult for the reader or student to understand what the poet is trying to convey. Hence, we have made a special effort to explain such classical and other references for the benefit of our distance education students.

Lines 97-110 : Eliot's note refers to the scene encountered by Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, iv, 140, when the fallen angel, in his journey across planets, reaches the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve, the first human beings created by God, lived their life together in absolute bliss and peace. Next, Eliot recalls a tragic event in the Latin poem, *Metamorphoses*, vi, by Ovid (43 BC-AD 18), another Roman poet, who touchingly describes the rape of young Philomela by King Tereus of Thrace (in ancient Italy), the husband of her sister, Procne. Later, she was meta morphosed (physically transformed) into a singing ninghtingale by the gods who took pity on her sad condition. The peculiar expression 'Jug Jug' is both the bird's song as well as a rude joking reference to the act of sexual union, the purity of the one being contrasted by Eliot with the vulgarity of the other interpretation. Through Philomel, the poet projects the enternal image of woman as victim in a male-dominated world. But as the scene unfolds, the society lady at the dressing table is revealed to be an exploiting seductress rather than an innocent victim, the sound of foot-steps on the stairs are of her approaching lover who now joins her. The one sided conversation that follows exposes the shallow values and priorities of such men and women caught up in the social whirl of modern times.

Lines 111 - 126 : The woman of this satiric episode is in a nervous mood, and would like to be entertained through a bit of light- hearted and frivolous conversation. But her man is not drawn into the amusing dialogue since he is in a pensive (thoughtful) mood. He is thinking of the fragility of life in the slum and what follows after death. 'Nothing again nothing' of l.120 is an echo of several literary sources :

- (a) Webster's *The White Devil*, V, 223-7;
- (b) Lear's warning to Cordelia (his daughter) in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, I, i, 'Nothing will come of nothing'; and
- (c) Ophelia's answer to Hamlet's query ____ 'I think nothing my lord', Hamlet, III, ii.

The man in Eliot's scene is still thinking of death, as is indicated by the repetition of a line from *The Tempest* of Shakespeare. (Please refer to l. 48 of *The Waste Land*). His continued silence draws an ironic remark from the woman. (see l. 126 of the text: 'Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?')

Lines 127 - 138 : The poet's allusion is to a popular American song of 1912, when Eliot was twenty-four years old:

The Shakespearian Rag
Most intelligent, very elegant,
That old classical drag,
Has the proper stuff
The line 'Lay on Macduff'.

The last phrase, 'Lay on Macduff', comes from *Macbeth*, one of the four major tragedies of Shakespeare, in which he explores the psychology of an exalted man and his wife who are driven to murder and, consequently, their own destruction through over-riding ambition.

The last utterance of Hamlet in Shakespeare's celebrated play is 'O, O, O', the repetition of it here mocks the woman's taunt to her lover. (Again, please see l. 126). Her abnormally nervous speech and indecisive behaviour recall Queen Dido's despair at Carthage when Aeneas finally deserts her. In a similar fashion, sleep had disappeared from the woman's 'lidless eyes' as she waited for the arrival of her lover on the appointed time. Eliot's artistic juxtaposition of the sublime (Dido's tragic story) with the ridiculous (the lowly placed London woman's plight) highlights the devaluation of human values in the early twentieth century.

Lines 139 - 172 : This comparatively long passage is the second scene in 'A Game of Chess'. The critics often pick this episode to illustrate (the American) Eliot's ignorance of the contemporary life and speech of the working class men and women in (the very British) London. He once frankly admitted that this episode involving a sexual encounter between Lil and Albert owes its origin to a story told him by his housemaid. Incidentally, everyone in India knows how talkative and informative on the neighbourhood scandals a housemaid could be. The language and diction in this scene are deliberately stylized as in a musical comedy. Eliot contrasts a meaningless and sterile sexual encounter between a lower middle-class woman and her man with the unchecked fertility of a woman in a pub (one of London's numerous popular public bar cum - restaurants). Both relationships, as cleverly presented in the two episodes, are a negation of the number of children that are likely to be born out of the union of a love marriage. The poet is here mainly involved with the basic problem of sexual morality, he is not concerned with the distinctions of class in society.

Dear students, in order to understand the second scene in the second part of *The Waste Land*, you have to image a situation in a public bar of the postwar London where the two women are having an intimate conversation about their immediate status and family circumstances. Lil is worried about the return after war of Albert, her soldier husband, while her unnamed friend wants her to take better care of herself before she welcomes back the man of the house. The experienced friend goes to the extent of advising Lil to order a new set of teeth (dentures) so as to look more attractive to her husband who has already paid her to fix the dentures. The soldiers

all over the world, when they return home from war, look forward to having a 'good time' with their wives or girl friends, and that includes plenty of sex. If the women do not provide that kind of relaxing entertainment, the men will naturally look for it somewhere else. As Lil looks accusingly at her wise and experienced friend, the latter advises her to take good care of Albert for her own sake. After all, why should Lil look old at just thirty one. Perhaps it is due to the pills she took to bring off an abortion having already aborted five times. She knows the pills have had a bad effect on her in spite of the assurances of the chemist from whom she bought the medicine. The friend is at a loss to understand why Lil married if she did not want children. When Albert finally returns home on a Sunday, Lil invites her friend to dinner to celebrate on the occasion, and she serves special dishes made out of pork (pig's meat). As the pub closes for the day, the women bid farewell to each other, all others present wishing a good night to everybody else. There is a touch of sadness of parting that colours the farewell at the pub.

46.3.3 Critical Comments

Line 92 : Eliot's use of the word 'laquearia' is meant to recall the dinner that Dido hosted in honour of Aeneas.

Lines 124-5 : Here, the allusion is to the story of Paolo and Francesca who, having subjected reason to lust, are in the second circle of Dante's *Inferno*. Dido and Cleopatra too are found in this very part of Hell.

Line 137: Eliot's note refers to the game of chess in Middleton's *Women Beware Women*, II, ii.

Line 141 : This is the call of the barman at the closing time in a British pub. The line is repeated throughout the rest of the scene as a refrain. It provides an echo of the idea expressed by Andrew Marvell in 'To His Coy Mistress', II. 185-6: But at my back I always hear Time's winged chariot hurrying near.

Line 172 . These are the last words uttered by Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, IV, before she drowns herself, driven mad by the double shock of rejection by Hamlet and her father's death.

Check Your Progress 2

- (a) Write a brief note on the significance of the first twenty lines (77-96) of 'A game of Chess.'

- (b) Explain with reference to the context 11.97 - 102.

(c) Briefly comment on the scene at the pub, it, 138 -72.

46.4 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we acquaint you with two fundamental points that a student needs to grasp beforehand for trying to understand Eliot's poems. The first is that his poetry is a kind of continuous stream of thought as well as a collection of his memories of the past events and works read by him. He quotes his favourite authors to himself in the poems that he writes, and this increases the complexity of his writings. Secondly, Eliot has an obsession with the problems of time, and he tends to let past, present and future times overlap each other. After this preamble (introductory remarks), we give you the glossary and detailed interpretation of the first part of *The Waste Land*, 'The Burial of the Dead', followed by additional critical comments to explain some of the allusions and reference, that we could not include in the interpretation. Then, you have the detailed explanation of 'A Game of Chess', the second part of the poem, on exactly the same pattern as attempted before. In 'Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises', we do an illustrative explanation with reference to the context of a model passage, the exact pattern of which you should follow in your own attempt at the exercises. This particular exercise is aimed to examine your close knowledge of the text of Eliot's poem, *The Waste Land*.

46.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

1. (a) See section 46.2 of the Unit.
- (b) See section 46.2.2 of the Unit.
- (c) This passage is taken from 'The Burial of the Dead', the first part of *The Waste Land* written by T. S. Eliot. The little of this section of the poem is derived from the service for the burial of the dead in the Church of England. The central theme of this part is barrenness, sterility, death and decay. Immediately before the passage under discussion, we have a scene involving Madame Sosostris, the famous prophecying woman, who uses the Tarot park of cards to predict the future of her customers.

Here, Eliot evokes the image of the 'unreal city' which could be London, Paris or any other northern snow bound city in winter. The people, on their way to work, are surrounded by the thick brown fog

of the early morning. The poet visualizes a crowd of people passing over London Bridge, and all of them are saddened by thoughts of death. Each man looks fixedly in front; the people exhale their sighs, short and irregular, in thick clouds of vapour as happens in sub-zero temperatures. The flowing crowd reminds Eliot of the passage in Dante's *Inferno*, where the poet describes the movement of the damned souls in Hell.

- (a) The first twenty lines (77-96) of 'A Game of Chess' deal with the subject of fatal romantic passion, which was a literary tradition of the Renaissance in Europe. Eliot deliberately imitates the style of that tradition. As an example, he recalls the famous first meeting of Mark Antony with Cleopatra as described by Enobarbus in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. The poet also remembers Belinda in *The Rape of the Lock* of Alexander Pope, and Dido Queen of Carthage in Virgil's *Aeneid*.
- (b) See section 46.3.2 of the Unit.
- (c) See the last paragraph of section 46.3.2.

The contrast that the poetry of Hardy and Hopkins offered to contemporary models lies in their use of ambiguity and shifting tonalities, their adoption of an ironic mode in short. At times, Hardy's poetry seems to be boldly experimental, characterised by frequent flashes of daring imagination. His experiments orchestrate the use of dialect words, abbreviations, archaisms, and 'kennings' (or verbal riddles in the style of Anglo-Saxon poetry), some of which would be found barbaric according to orthodox aesthetics. Nevertheless, Hardy functions largely within the traditional forms, presenting the drama of unresolved contradictions: he has himself described his poems as unadjusted impressions. If he tended to relate the local and individual to cosmic pessimism, he was characteristically tentative, holding his judgement in suspense. Ultimately his vision is ironic, involving the rapid and unsettling juxtaposition of images and counter-perceptions that anticipates modernist techniques.

Both Robert Bridges and Hopkins experiment with prosody. The former's attempts stem from Greek and Latin prosody, resulting in much charm and delicacy at the cost of poetic concentration and intensity. For these qualities we must go to Hopkins whose 'spring rhythm,' borrowed from Anglo-Saxon prosody, was reinforced by fresh imagery and compact structure. By keeping the number of stressed syllables fixed and varying the number of unstressed syllables, Hopkins was able to revive the 'Metaphysical' mode linking it to modern poetry. This mode, submerged through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was characterised, as we all know, by ingenious analogy—the extended or cryptic 'conceit'—the yoking of contraries and irregular rhythm and diction. Such a sensibility was sharply different from the Romantic and Victorian, banishing the bogey of 'high seriousness' from the concept of poetry and locating the poem's value not in ideas or autobiography but in the psychological process of creation in the poet's mind. In this sense, the modern movement amounts to a rejection of expressivist categories in favour of the Aristotelian theory of mimetic representation, although the former were never suppressed. The modern poet's unconscious was a storehouse of heterogeneity stirring him obscurely, prompting him, as it were, to get rid of excessively accumulated experience. The disparateness and breadth of the cultural tradition made for impersonality of expression. The 'metaphysical' poet brought together dissimilars—secular and divine love, for instance—so that the discord plunged him deep into the theme, the greater awareness of the conflict demanding greater poetic technique.

Such are the larger implications of Hopkins's achievement of forging a style capable of conveying the discords and conflicts in his mind. Apart from the contrapuntal play of regular metrical form and irregular speech rhythms, the intermeshing of 'inscape' and 'instress' anticipates the techniques adopted in much modern poetry. If 'inscape' is a variation on the principle of individuation (as defined by Coleridge), a focus on *quidditas* or *haecceitas*—the thisness and whatness of things—'instress' is the force and energy holding together the 'inscape.' In Hopkins's concern with the outer reflection of a thing as a thing, we encounter the modern mind's awareness of objects in their essential particularity and its simultaneous search in and through artistic form, that is, the poem itself, of the universal.

In the 1880s and 1890s the interrelated and overlapping tendencies of aestheticism, impressionism, and symbolism contributed to the rejection of Victorian priggish moralism and scientific materialism. Aestheticism or the movement known as *l'art pour l'art* (art for art's sake) stressed impersonal craftsmanship and a stylized rhetoric of passion. These new elements later became the basis for the ironic and somewhat cold detachment so distinctive of modernist poetry. Stylization was closely related to decadence, that is, the desire to understand the deeper and darker resources of the psyche guided in turn by a sense of overwrought aestheticism. The symbolist movement often aimed at suggesting an inner richness and mystery, and was thus part of the pervasive reaction against the positivist attitudes bred by technological smugness: it fell back upon symbols in order to capture the life above or below