



T. S Eliot's "The Wasteland": A Spiritual Pilgrimage through Allusions

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the interconnectivity of different parts of the poem depicting the journey from social and individual barrenness of human ethics and morality to the proposed means of spiritual contentment in "The Wasteland" (1922) by T. S. Eliot. This most successful and intricate work of the author, reputed as an exemplary modern poem, portrays this journey in the form of allusions. This objective is achieved by applying the theory of intertextuality by Julia Kristeva in 1966. The extensive utilization of allusions in this poem, with references made to over thirty writers and an excess of one hundred allusions, imbues it with a substantial amount of intellectualism. Eliot employs a wide range of allusions in his literary technique, which proves to be highly effective in making the reader travel from spiritual emptiness to spiritual fulfillment. These portraits from religion, history, society, psychology, and other sources design a trail to let the reader experience spiritual realization.

Key Words: *Spiritual pilgrimage, allusions, religion, emptiness, journey*



Introduction

Thomas Stern Eliot, renowned for his modernist plays, insightful critiques, esteemed essays, and acclaimed poetry, is widely regarded as the preeminent literary icon of the 20th century. In recognition of his exceptional literary contributions, he was granted the Nobel Prize in 1948. He is an erudite individual of his time, possessing expertise in over ten languages, and displaying extensive knowledge of myths and legends. In addition, his essay titled "Tradition and Individual Talents (1919)" serves as evidence of his robust faith in tradition. Among his celebrated works, *The Wasteland* (1922) stands out as the most victorious, intricate, and enigmatic piece of poetry that has been rendered into numerous languages (Brooks, 2018).

The abundance of allusions in this poem, referring to over thirty different writers and exceeding one hundred in total, gives it a highly intellectual tone. Eliot's extensive use of allusions is highly effective in effectively conveying his message (Akhundova, 2020). This meticulously written epic poem published approximately three years after the end of World War I, portrays the emptiness of human morality and spirituality through expertly executed cinematic-style episodes. This well-crafted poem skillfully presents a series of unrelated events to underscore the emptiness that permeates humanity's ethics and spiritual values and takes readers to the ultimate direction of spiritual accomplishment (Bellour 2016).

This outstandingly remarkable piece of literature is analyzed through different lenses and different perspectives like its modernist characteristics, its allusive nature, its symbolic features, its psychotic structure, or representation of broken images. Even Clark (2018) has mentioned Wilson declaring it as a puzzle rather than a poem. In this study, researchers have attempted to interpret this poem as a journey in which Eliot takes his readers from spiritual decay to fulfillment through allusions. The goals of the researchers for this study are:

- Indicate allusions used in all five sections of *The Wasteland* by T. S. Eliot.
- Analyze how different references are interconnected with each other.
- Trace the creation of meaning that occurs when different references are connected.

The following are the questions the researcher studied:

- Which allusions are used in all five sections of "The Wasteland" by T. S. Eliot?
- How have these allusions-maintained unity and created an effective message?



Literature Review

Sigmund Freud's belief that desires are what defines a person's true nature is very accurately and effectively shown in the poem. The characters in "The Waste Land" have strong desires for physical pleasure and long for love. This is clear in the speaker's admission: "what have we given? My friend, blood shaking my heart. The awful daring of a moment's surrender. An age of prudence can never be retracted. By this, and this only, we have existed." The sentences suggest that our feelings and wants are very important to who we are, but the people living in the wasteland are unable to control their physical urges. So, pleasure is more important than faith or belief. In *The Waste Land*, sexuality is portrayed as involving forbidden relationships and overly emotional behavior (Miller, 2010). Having too many extreme and unhealthy desires has caused a lot of harm to people's lives nowadays.

Many critics see the poem as showing how values in the twentieth century have gotten worse and how morality has fallen apart. According to critic Mahmud (2020), the poem portrays the struggles and emotions of people in the modern world deeply and touchingly. This is shown in the first line of the poem which tells us desires and senses are very important for human suffering. The speaker believes that "April is the cruelest month." This month makes our senses come alive, which can be dangerous because it arouses desire and lust. So, it is best to keep them quiet and hidden. Morrison (1996) says that April is the worst month because it brings out intense and old-fashioned sexual desires. In the first part of the poem, "The Burial of the Dead," not being able to control desires is compared to the excitement and danger of riding in a sleigh. When people let their emotions and feelings blindly control them, their minds lose control, and they are driven into disaster without thinking (Mahmud, 2020). Similarly, the idea of many people walking in a circle implies that people who live in desolate areas wander without purpose, trying to find enjoyment, comfort, and excitement because their lives are empty, meaningless, and without any spiritual guidance. This lack of spiritual guidance leads to a crisis, where people value physical pleasure more than spiritual fulfillment. This crisis leaves modern individuals feeling hopeless, negative, and having dark thoughts.

Moreover, modern science has conflicted with the beliefs and spiritual values that have provided meaning to people's lives for a long time, leading to the idea that God no longer exists (Hastings, 2020). The religious crisis began when God was killed, and science took over as Europe's new belief system. Modernists believe that science can solve all human problems and suffering and



improve individuals' lives. This is why they see religion as not logical or crazy. According to McGrath (2007), atheism started becoming popular again during modern times. Atheism is the belief that a person can think and understand things on their own, without relying on religion. Without religion, people can be independent and find their answers about the purpose of life. Therefore, many people believe that one can only be truly free if they believe that they are responsible for their existence. Therefore, atheism is viewed to get away from something.

These reasons explain why Eliot uses powerful symbols to describe spiritual destruction. The comparison of water is very important in the poem. Clark (2018) quotes Wilson suggesting that Gerontion, who lives in a dull rented house, daydreams about the young men who fought in the rain. Similarly, Prufrock longs to experience the excitement of riding on waves and exploring the beauty of the ocean's chambers (Zhang, & Jang, 2019). Apollinax is pictured getting stronger from the underwater caves in coral islands (Akhundova, 2020). So, in this poem, Mr. Eliot says that water represents freedom and enlightenment of the soul. In *The Waste Land*, the lack of water means there is no faith or salvation.

According to Campbell & Moyer (2011), the story of Christ is a transformation of a strong plant image. Jesus is on the cross, which is called Holy Rood, and he is also the fruit that grows on the tree. Jesus is like a special fruit that gives us everlasting life. This fruit comes from a tree that was not allowed to be eaten from in the Garden of Eden. The dead tree can be seen as the exact opposite of the Tree of Life. The death of the tree indicates that there is a spiritual problem. In the Christian religion, spring represents the arrival of Christ, resurrection, and revival. However, in the poem "*The Wasteland*", the speaker says that April is the cruelest month, which means that the people living in the wasteland are spiritually dead.

According to Brooker and Bentley (1990), death is necessary for life and is talked about in sources like Frazer, Weston, and the Bible. In all three, death and rebirth through water are important rituals for physical and spiritual renewal. In each of these three situations, death means the end of something, but it also marks the start of something new. Death by water in this context represents the soul being born again, which is scary for the people living in a barren land. The poem strongly rejects the idea of spiritual life. Madame Sosostris warns her clients to be afraid of dying by drowning in water (Herbert, 2010).



Furthermore, if people do not manage their instincts well or are consistently unable to find satisfaction, it can lead to neurosis. According to Bush (2013), when someone quickly gives in to their sexual desires, it can make them feel broken and destroy them. This is how Eliot sees desire, as something that can be harmful to a person's survival. He discusses how he feels sexually attracted to someone and how religion makes him feel good and fulfilled. Therefore, the poem can be seen as a summary of these two experiences.

Brooks (2018) talks about the story of the Holy Grail. He says that the court where the wealthy Fisher King lived became a secret because some of the girls who went there were sexually assaulted and had their gold cups stolen. Bad luck on the land happens because of the crime committed by the King and his soldiers. It reminds the story of Oedipus Rex from long ago, where bad things happened to a city because he married his mother without knowing it. However, the poem's title, "The Wasteland", represents how humans have turned away from God. Eliot's poem could be seen as his life story, which has striking similarities to St. John's Augustine was an author that Eliot read when he was young. But after becoming a believer, Augustine admits: "I left you, my God. When I was young, I strayed too far from your support and became empty and unproductive." So, life without God is boring and without purpose; it is a long journey that has no path and no hope of finding oneself and becoming better.

Rome was a powerful empire, but she was facing many problems, including corruption, decline in morals, and invasions from barbarian tribes. This caused St. Augustine to write "The City of God," where he argued that true happiness and salvation could only be found in a heavenly city, not in the earthly city of Rome. He believed that the earthly city was temporary and would eventually come to an end, but the heavenly city was eternal and would last forever. St. Augustine's writing was meant to provide hope and reassurance to Christians during a tumultuous time in history. In the same sense, Europe in the twenties was considered a place where moral values were lacking.

According to Clark (2018), Conrad Aiken, his contemporary critic, states that Mr. Eliot sees *The Wasteland* as a clear symbol of spiritual dryness. His poem is divided into two parts. One part is set in present-day London, and the other part is set in a haunted wilderness from ancient stories. However, the Wasteland is not just a physical place, but also represents the protagonist's barren soul and the unbearable world around him. The person wants water in the desert at twilight because they are thirsty in the evening in London.



The poem shows how the modern man feels mentally and spiritually broken. Before Eliot converted to Anglo-Catholicism, he went through a difficult time of spiritual pain and conflict. This led him to write "The Wasteland", a poem that not only has literary value but also speaks to readers today and reflects their own lives. According to Slattery (2011), Schwartz-Salant says that death is a transition phase that leads to a new life. Raff (2019) believes that new life can only happen when the old one dies. He compares the art to the sower's job of putting seeds in the ground, which later grow and come to life. This means that in the poem when the characters accept death, they are trying to start a new life with the help of the Christian Gospel.

Looking at it differently, the death instinct is a force that makes an organism want to return to its original state of being complete and pure, in contrast to the instinct to stay alive. Instead of seeing death as a physical thing, Karl Jung sees it as a state of mind. According to Welman (two thousand), the Jungian idea of death means going back to being unified and one with our original state. This includes returning to where our ego initially came from and uniting with opposing forces. In simple words, death means moving towards becoming whole again and getting back the unity that was lost. According to Welman (2000), when we have experiences that make us feel like our personal boundaries are disappearing or expanding, our imagination represents them as images of death. The poem presents that death and dying are metaphors for how we live and become more aware of our own lives and who we are. It also helps us understand the world better to have a fresher start.

Similarly, the chapel mentioned at the end of the poem represents the house of God. In the Church Age, it signifies a sacred place. Surprisingly, in the "What the Thunder Said" poem, the walk to Emmaus is combined with the approach to a dangerous chapel. According to Weston, the latter means starting to understand the secrets of connecting with both our bodies and spirits. If the stories of medieval legends show that achieving a goal brings back the growth of a barren land and the ability for the king to have children, then the success in Eliot's *The Wasteland* is only related to emotions and the mind. In the last part, Eliot mentions Tiresias, which gives a small amount of hope or a sign that there might be a way to escape the wasteland. This is because, in the *Odyssey*, Tiresias helps Odysseus find his way back home. What is important here is the sound of thunder. The loud sounds of thunder in the poem make the main character feel like they have been chosen by a god. In simpler terms, the critic Miller (2006) believes that



the stanzas in the thunder commandments show that the hero is going through a spiritual change. It is like he has become more generous, compassionate, and disciplined.

Eliot's description portrays the idea of unity between humans and their natural surroundings. This unity is represented by the image of people working together with the wind, which symbolizes the universal spirit. It also signifies a harmonious combination of emotions and practical abilities. This means that when our thoughts and emotions clash, and our personal experiences clash with the things around us, it helps us resolve conflicts within ourselves and prevents us from feeling empty and believing that life has no meaning. One way to show that you are purified and saved is by leaving everything behind and spending time alone in a quiet place.

At the end of the poem, the main character feels lonely but in a spiritual way. It is like they have become mystics and have found inner understanding. Bellour (2016) quotes Unger saying that when people feel isolated and disconnected from the world, it can be seen as part of religious purification. This feeling is seen as something to strive for spiritual fulfillment. The person speaking becomes like Buddha, who goes to a quiet place and sits under a special tree. While there in seclusion, he has a special moment of understanding that has enlightened Asia for 2500 years. Jesus went into the desert for forty days. He came back from the desert with his message. To feel connected to ourselves, we sometimes need to be alone. This is what happens to Eliot in "The Wasteland". Bellour (2016) agrees that the lonely traveler, who sat fishing on the shore with the dry plain behind him, is a poet who has gone through a difficult psychological journey using a religious passion.

Eliot became a Christian to find comfort from the stress of modern life and prevent mental breakdowns. He believes that religion is the only thing that gives purpose and importance to someone's life. In simple words, James (2002) says that religion is one way that people find happiness. It can turn bad sadness into deep and long-lasting happiness. James believes that religion can help improve mental health because it provides structure and meaning to our lives. It can reduce anxiety and make us feel connected to others. Schumaker (2001) agrees with this view and adds that religion can also give us a sense of belonging and purpose. At the end of the poem, the pilgrim seems to have found comfort and peace through his religious journey. By giving up control and putting trust in faith, a person can experience happiness, fulfillment, and inner peace. These moments will be free of sexual desires.



Some people who criticize Eliot believe that his problems with sex and spirituality are closely connected. This is because Eliot believes that religion is an important way for him to avoid his scary family problems and unusual sexual desires. He discovered that his wife was mentally ill, and their marriage was in trouble, which made him more inclined to give himself up to a higher power. MacDiarmid (2003) believes and supports this opinion, “We think that Eliot's decision to change his beliefs was a way for him to hide his mental health issues and anxiety about his sexuality.” This means that we think Eliot's desire to talk about religion or Christian mysticism is a sign of a mental problem, and we also need to remember that hysteria is a condition where physical symptoms happen without a physical reason.

According to Sedikides (2010), Freud recognizes religion as a way that people protect themselves from anxiety and stress. Religion comes from when a person is a small child and feels helpless and needs help. As they grow older, they realize how weak they are compared to the big challenges in life, and they feel the same way they did as a child. So, they try to feel better by believing in the same things that protected them when they were babies. Eliot leaving his family to go to Britain causes him to feel very sad, alone, and disconnected from his spirituality. The poet was not happy with his strict Puritan family who followed rules of behavior very strictly. However, Eliot knew that his life was delicate, even though he was far from his parents. He tried to find comfort and connection with God after losing his parents. In simpler terms, Freud says that psychoanalysis has taught us that there is a strong connection between the way someone feels about their father and their belief in God. He believes that God is just a powerful father figure in people's minds. He also says that when a young person's dad loses his authority, they often stop believing in God too. This could mean that Eliot's religious needs come from his Unitarian upbringing when he was young. He wants to see his parents again or remember how they were because he misses them.

Research Methodology

This exploratory research adopts a descriptive and qualitative approach, specifically focusing on the allusions used in *The Wasteland* by Thomas Stern Eliot. For conducting this study, the theory of intertextuality expounded by Julia Kristeva (1980) in 1966, serves as the theoretical framework. Through the application of intertextual analysis, this research seeks to unravel the interconnectivity of disconnected allusions, contributing to creating meaningful message.



Studying *The Wasteland* about other texts means looking at how other texts are connected and what they talk about. These other texts included books, cultural ideas, historical events, and philosophical concepts. Intertextual study helped researchers understand and analyze how different parts of the poem are connected. This study looks at different ideas from books and ways of thinking about books to understand how *The Wasteland* mentions, or hints at other books, making it more meaningful and creating a network of connected ideas from different texts.

Intertextuality means that texts are connected and depend on each other. Each text shows signs of other texts, which can be obvious or hidden, and this affects how the text is understood.

Intertextuality does many things. It helps us understand better, creates a link to past writings, connects with culture and history, questions or changes existing texts, and involves the reader more. Direct intertextuality looks at when a poem mentions or quotes other texts or authors directly. Indirect intertextuality is when texts are connected in subtle ways by similarities in their themes, symbols, or structures. Cultural intertextuality looks at how a poem relates to the culture it comes from, like its history or social situation. This includes things like myths, religious texts, important events, or cultural traditions. Eliot has implied all types of intertextualities in the poem considered.

Close reading of this poem provided a careful look at it to understand the words, how they are written, and how they are put together. This helped researchers find things in the poem that come from other pieces of writing, like quotes or references. The comparative analysis looked at how this poem and other texts are similar, different, or change in terms of themes, motifs, or the story. Studying the historical and cultural context helped us understand the influences, traditions, or conversations that the poem is involved in. The reader response approach explained how the connections between different texts influence the understanding and interpretation of this poem. It encouraged researchers to join in figuring out the poem's different meanings.

Using the theory of structuralism, the researchers studied the hidden structures, patterns, and systems in the poem to discover connections and influences from other texts. The poststructuralist approach encouraged questioning the idea of definite meanings and looking at how meanings change, interrupt, or reanalyze existing texts. The study of reception theory has helped us understand how readers play a role in creating meaning. It has looked at how other texts influence



their understanding and connection to the poem. The new historicism approach helped the researcher look at the poem as something that came from a specific time in history. They studied how the poem connected with other texts and talked about important cultural and historical topics. The ideas mentioned above gave a detailed way to study this poem by comparing it to other texts. By using this framework, the scholars figured out the complicated network of connections and influences in the poem, which helped understand its meaning, historical background, and cultural importance more deeply. By using other texts to create meaning, the poem became a diverse and complex blend of voices, ideas, and traditions. It encouraged researchers to examine the complex relationship between different texts and have conversations that go beyond just one piece of writing.

Analysis

Source of the poem

Eliot's strong faith in religion led him to find inspiration in James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890), a work that explored the moral and spiritual voids present in society through a study of various religions. Another book that inspired Eliot to write "The Wasteland" was written by Jessie L. Weston, "From Ritual to Romance" that dates to 1919. Both books discuss the tale of Fisher King, which illustrates how his emptiness of inner spirit caused his realm to also become a desolate wasteland.

During the Augustan era, the monarch mentioned as fisher king suffered from sterility caused by an injury, limiting his activities to fishing solely in the vicinity of his palace. The knight Perceval embarked on a mission to find the Holy Grail, which was believed to be the vessel containing the blood of Jesus Christ after his crucifixion, renowned for its healing properties. In this poem, Eliot has skillfully incorporated both ethical and spiritual considerations while also drawing upon the symbolic connotations of the title "The Wasteland" from the myth.

Epigraph

The opening lines of the poem contained an epigraph derived from Petronius' *Satyricon*, written in Greek and Latin during the first century AD. This impressive and fantastic satire humorously imitates imperial Rome exaggeratedly and surprisingly. The epigraph translates to:



"For I saw with my own eyes the Sibyl of Cumae hanging in a jar, and when the boys asked her, 'Sibyl, what do you want?' she replied, 'I want to die.'" The significance of this epigraph lies in the themes it introduces and the overall meaning of "The Waste Land."

In chapter 48 of *Satyricon*, an outstanding literary masterpiece, the ancient Greco-Roman legend of Sibyl, a venerable prophet, is analyzed. The character from mythology was given the gift of living forever by Apollo, however, Sibyl neglected to request the everlastingness of her youth. So, her physical form decayed to the point where only her vocal sound remained, and she was confined to a container. Eliot draws a parallel between contemporary, morally decayed individuals and the old seer, highlighting how modern people resemble their predecessors.

The epigraph also hints at the themes of seeking redemption and renewal. Sibyl's desire to die may be interpreted as modern people desire for release from the burden of existence. In the context of "The Wasteland," it can be seen as a longing for a spiritual rebirth or a purging of the modern world's wasteland-like condition.

In the current era, individuals are residing in a desolate environment characterized by apprehension towards existence and plagued by a desire to end their lives. The poem exudes a negative attitude that is evident in every line. The poem was quite extended in its initial stages and was entrusted to Ezra Pound for revision. Pound made several revisions to the poem, eliminating unnecessary particulars and condensing its content. Eliot was grateful for his technical input and honored him with the dedication "Il miglior fabbro," which translates to "the better craftsman. "

Overall, the epigraph sets the stage for the exploration of various themes in "The Wasteland," including the decline of civilization, the loss of meaning and communication, and the search for redemption. It establishes a sense of desolation and spiritual emptiness, which the poem subsequently delves into through multifaceted and complex allusions and diverse voices.

The burial of the dead (lines 01 – 76)

The initial section of the poem discusses an Egyptian ceremony centered around the notion that death leads to resurrection or a fresh beginning. According to certain analysts, it represents the Christian practice of conducting a funeral for the deceased. The segment commences with a mention of the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer (Cooper, 2023). Chaucer opens the prologue by stating that April is the most merciful month, and Eliot has ingeniously employed



the same phrase as a paradoxical indicator at the start of *The Wasteland* by indicating April as the cruelest month. He employs this allusion to depict the despondency and melancholy of the era, where amidst a ruined and sterile environment, this harbinger of spring induces even more sadness and desolation.

Eliot expresses the dismal state of London by lamenting with verses from Richard Wagner's "Tristan and Isolde" opera (Nattiez, 2021). An essential reference to mention is the character of Madame Sosostrius, a fortune teller in Aldus Huxley's book titled "Crome Yellow" (Fehn, 2023) published in 1923. Madame Sosostrius, as depicted in Eliot's work, predicts the fate of contemporary individuals and prophecies that they will meet their demise through drowning. A seasoned elderly woman employs her expertise in tarot card reading to predict the fate of an individual who may face the possibility of succumbing to water.

Eliot cleverly alludes to Shakespeare's words from *The Tempest* (2019), "those are pearls that were his eyes" to describe the eyes of the drowned corpse. The subsequent reference that stands out is the reference to Baudelaire's work "The Seven Old Men" (Booth, 2015), in which he denotes Paris as the "Unreal City". He alludes to comparing the moral and social state of London to that of Baudelaire's Paris. To achieve the same objective, Eliot cleverly incorporated a religious allusion by referring to Dante's "Inferno" (2015), which he also uses to depict "London Bridge" as Dante's "Gate of Hell". Eliot has employed several expressions in this section of the poem to elucidate the spiritual and ethical desolation of contemporary individuals.

Eliot's literary works symbolize the decay of current societal values with terms such as "dead tree" representing modern barrenness, "heaps of broken image" embodying a loss of spiritual values, "brown fog" signifying the emptiness of urban life, and "one-eyed man" portraying the modern individual's reliance on science and commerce. He employs red rock to portray the Christian church and the son of man to depict holy Christ in his religious depictions. So, in this part he has mentioned spiritual decay in the form of loss of spiritual values, dependence on science and commerce and disconnectedness from religion.

The game of chess (lines 77 – 172)

This section of the poem is named after a work called *The Game of Chess* by Middleton (2010), while the central storyline is derived from another of his works entitled *Women Beware Women* (2007). The central storyline revolves around a charming individual seducing a married woman



while his mother-in-law delights in playing a game of chess. Eliot skillfully describes the magnificence of the chair she was seated in by referring to Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra (Crane, 2010). At this juncture, he cites Queen Dido of Carthage's ceiling to elucidate the backdrop derived from Virgil's Aeneid (Horsfall, 2017).

Later, Eliot refers to book IV of Milton's Paradise Lost (2017) and draws a parallel between the appearance of "gallant" in the setting and Satan's entrance into the garden of Eden in the "Sylvan Scene." He represents the potential sorrow of the wife through the tale of Philomela who was seduced by her brother-in-law, King Trent, in Ovid's Metamorphosis (Solodow, 2014). In the final segment, he alludes to a quotation from Hamlet (2019) by Shakespeare in which Ophelia, who is passing away, bids farewell with the words "good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night. " Once more, the individual utilizes a phrase from Shakespeare's The Tempest (2019) - "those are pearls that were his eyes" - to describe the eyes of the seduced wife.

Eliot employs both English and French expressions in this section to describe the immoral behavior and spiritually vacuous mindset of present-day individuals. He uses the French expression "Jug Jug" (Khan, Mansoor, & Khan, 2015) to denote sexual activity in his writing. The rat signifies the contemporary human who infiltrates the flora to ruin it, the myopic businessperson promoting abortion pills, and the lifeless skeleton represents spiritual decay in the field of industry and economy.

The fire sermon (lines 173 – 311)

This section of the poem derives its title from the Fire Sermon of Lord Buddha (Sharrad, 2020), which illustrates how hate and lust can ignite and consume humanity. Eliot accompanies the contemporary individual by the banks of the Thames River, inviting contemplation on the state of society. By drawing inspiration from Edmund Spenser's Prothalamion (Cooper, 2020), he extracts the expression "Sweet Thames" and employs it as a means of emphasizing the contamination present in the river, symbolizing the decline of contemporary society.

In his later work, Eliot cleverly employs a religious reference of monk Bonivard using Lord Byron's "Water of Lemman" phrase from The Prisoner of Chillon (Kędra-Kardela, & Kędzińska, 2019). Due to his refusal to relinquish his rights, this monk was subjected to an extended period of imprisonment. In the end, after he discovered the ability to have affection for his sense of hopelessness, his destiny took a turn, and he became liberated. Nevertheless, despite having



gained his freedom, he remained in a state of profound despair and confusion, unsure of how to navigate his newfound independence. This reference exemplified the state of contemporary humans who had lost their way and were disheartened. Once more, he refers to London as Unreal City, drawing on Baudelaire's use of the term in "The Seven Old Men" (Booth, 2015) to describe Paris.

The following lines introduce Tiresias, the knowledgeable elder and prophet in Sophocles' play "King Oedipus" (Vanzo, 2023), as a storyteller who happens to be in a woman's private space. The contemporary gentleman is exhibiting purely automatic affection towards the woman, devoid of any genuine sentiments, and discarding her as soon as his goal is attained. It is suggested that love can be viewed as a mere manifestation of carnal desire. Once again, Eliot incorporates four lines from the opera by Wagner, initially referenced in the previous section to express despair over pitiable circumstances.

Eliot alludes to Augustine's confession (O'Connell, 2020) wherein he pleads for deliverance from the flames of sensual desire to conclude this segment. He acknowledges that contemporary society, globally, is lacking in moral and spiritual values, using King Augustus and Lord Buddha as symbols of the West and East, respectively. The concluding verse of this segment, "Burning, Burning, Burning, Burning," cites Lord Buddha's fire sermon, which conveys the message that the fervor of desire and animosity engulfs the entire globe.

This section also provides symbols and phrases to convey progress in science and technology as well as in industry. The advanced trams of today represent the scientific advancements made but unfortunately have contributed to the transformation of society into a self-centered, materialistic, and money-driven culture. The presence of withered trees symbolizes the decline and subjugation of the natural world due to modernization, commercialization, and scientific advancements.

Death by water (lines 312 – 321)

This section's title can be interpreted as a realization of Madame Sosostris' prediction (Fehn, 2023) that the demise of contemporary society will be caused by water. Water, which is commonly associated with life, renewal, freshness, and cleansing, has now ironically turned into a fatal element for those living in barren lands. Eliot's conclusive remarks on his pessimistic themes from the preceding sections can be found in this succinct portion of the poem.



This section commences with the deceased mariner Phlebas, who perished by drowning under Madame Sosostris' prediction. Eliot has described the contemporary individual with a focus on commerce and trade as a Phoenician figure. Around 1500 BC, the Phoenicians were known to be prosperous merchants during the era of ancient Greece. According to Eliot, achieving materialistic and scientific success leads to death instead of achieving liberation.

What the thunder said (lines 322 – 433)

This section of the poem offers a glimmer of hope and direction for contemporary individuals seeking to escape the bleak and deteriorating cultural state. Eliot has transported the poem's narrator away from the ruined city and onto the mountains where the booming thunder speaks to him. In this section, the heading represents a glimmer of hope and rejuvenation through imparting instructions for redemption.

Eliot presents a positive and tranquil depiction, before alluding to Dante's *inferno* (2015) and stating that he "I have heard the key" to emphasize the guiding theme. In his writing, he cleverly incorporates allusive poetry, such as the line "revive for a moment broken Coriolanus" from Shakespeare's play *Coriolanus* (Jagendorf, 2015). Wagner utilizes the words "the boat responded" in the context of his opera.

Eliot makes a reference to the protagonist, named "Hieronymus," in Thomas Kyd's play *The Spanish Tragedy* (Davies, 2018). Towards the conclusion of the Sanskrit poem, references are made to Indian myth using certain words such as *Datta*, meaning to offer, *Dayadhvam*, meaning to empathize, and *Damyata*, meaning to regulate. In addition, the final line of this poem reads "Shanti, Shanti, Shanti," signifying serenity with the Sanskrit language.

The thunder teaches that there are three important things we should do: give, show sympathy, and have self-control. The thunder's first command "give" means you should stop being selfish, self-centered, and isolated. Patea, & Derrick, (2015) believes that the Upanishads, a text in Hinduism, views life as about being, not having. He says that people's worth is not determined by what they possess, but by what they give to others. The thunder teaches us another important value called 'sympathize', which means to show understanding and care for others. It urges the people living in the wasteland to be compassionate. This quality is central to Christianity as the Son of God came to this world to be crucified to teach us to have compassion and to focus on caring for others instead of just thinking about our basic needs. In this case, Campbell & Moyers



(2011) says that the wounded king in the Grail legend is like Christ. He is there to make people feel sorry and bring life to an empty place. The third rule of thunder is to have control. It means being able to control your strong desires and finding a balance between your thoughts and feelings. According to Bailin (1996), thunder comes after being generous and understanding, and it represents the importance of being able to control oneself.

Conclusion

In today's time, when people are not as focused on doing what's right, physical desires are more important than spiritual beliefs (Fehn, 2023). This leads to feeling mentally unbalanced and a sense of a difficult situation and decline. The waste landers are feeling sad and lost because of their materialistic attitude towards the provisions of life. They keep chasing after things they think will make them feel better (Bellour, 2016). Eliot has highlighted it in different sections of the poem and has attempted to explore ways to feel emotionally whole. The shift from "The Burial of the Dead" to "What the Thunder Said" follows a spiritual journey, suggesting that we can find inner salvation. "The Wasteland" transitions from a feeling of emptiness and despair to a hopeful outlook for a fresh start in life (Raff 2019). In a time when science, secularism, and sexual freedom are dominant, religion allows modern people to have a spiritual experience and find inner peace and harmony. Instead of looking for comfort in earthly and dark desires, religion can help ease a person's pain and bring them together as a complete and balanced person (Hastings, 2020). Eliot uses religion to protect himself from his traumatic experiences. The most important thing Eliot uses to structure his poem is the idea of going on a journey so that when we see the poem as a search for understanding and emotional balance, we can feel it moving forward.

Finding

The Wasteland is a complicated, modern poem that has lots of different references and connections to other books, religions, and myths. It is pretty complicated and has multiple layers of meaning to it. The poem is seen as a mixture of different pieces and voices, showing the broken and disheartened time after World War I.

A significant characteristic of "The Wasteland" is its connection with ancient texts and myths. Eliot uses different mythological characters and stories. The character Tiresias, the Fisher King, King Arthur, Madame Sosostris, and many others are mentioned in connection with the sadness and loss of faith in our society today. Starting with a quote from Canterbury tales, ironically representing the contemporary morally hollow society, Eliot ends at a quote from spiritually



fulfilling religious upanished. Besides using references to other literature, "The Wasteland" also uses a technique called intertextual montage. Eliot combines and blends different voices, styles, and ways of speaking to make a mix of different ideas and ways of thinking. This technique shows how people's minds and society nowadays are all over the place, with many different thoughts and ideas trying to get noticed.

The primary focus of the poem is to showcase how modern society has turned spiritually desolate and hollow. The contemporary individual dwells in a place that is advanced in terms of science and materialism, but deprived of morality and spirituality, resulting in a wasteland. Eliot's adept incorporation of symbolic and allusive methodologies has assisted him in examining the prevalent societal state by utilizing past events and their repercussions. The first four sections of the poem contain allusions to the decline of humanity regarding their religiosity, morality, and sexuality. Conversely, the final section of the poem offers references aimed at guiding individuals on how to achieve their liberation. Eliot believes that by following the advice conveyed through the thunder's message - to show empathy, take charge, and be generous - humans can overcome their bleak, unfulfilling moral and spiritual state and find solace from suffering and decay.

Overall, "The Wasteland" is a great example of how different texts are connected and referenced in poetry to create a spiritual journey. Eliot uses a lot of different books, religions, and myths to write his poem where the speaker and the various voices in the poem navigate a desolate landscape in search of meaning, redemption, and spiritual rebirth. He mixes them to create a complex and layered piece of writing. The intertextual references and religious allusions in the poem make it more interesting and meaningful. They include ideas and voices from different sources, which allow readers to think about many different things and connect with different traditions. These references also give the poem a deeper meaning, showing how the modern world has become disappointed with problematic cultures.

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