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WASTE LAND

The Waste Land is a complex erudite, cryptic, spiritually earnest and sometimes lyrical. First published in 1922 and it was dedicated to Ezra Pound who played an important role in the editing of the poem.

When it came out it was acclaimed as the beginning of a new type of poetry, capable of expressing the post-war's sense of depression and futility. He diagnosed the collapse of values that followed the bloodshed of WWI

Characterised by shifting scenarios, multiple voices and changes in form, the Waste Land is a very long poem, structured in 5 different sections:

- 1) The Burial of the Dead: it deals with the coming of spring in a sterile land, centred on the basic opposition between sterility and fertility, life and death.
- 2) A Game of Chess: based on the just opposition of present squalor and past ambiguous splendour.
- 3) The Fire Sermon: it reinforces the theme of squalor and it introduces Tiresias, the blind spectator, considered by Eliot the most important character in the poem.
- 4) Death by Water: focused on the idea of purification by water
- 5) What the Thunder Said: final section, conveys the image of the disintegration of Western civilisation and it suggests its possible salvation. A possible solution is found in a sort of sympathy with other human beings. The solution does not modify the general atmosphere of desolation.

In addition the poem includes also Eliot's own notes which explain some of his quotations and metaphors, allusions... Eliot used many symbols, legends and myths and he is aware of the difficulty of his quotations, that's why he included some notes.

Eliot drew inspiration from a wide range of cultural fragments and sources.

- 1) the Bible
- 2) Dante's Divina Commedia
- 3) Baudelaire, French symbolist
- 4) Shakespeare
- 5) John Donne, metaphysical poet
- 6) Homer's Odyssey
- 7) Ovid's Metamorphoses
- 8) The Upanishads, Hinduism's religious text

He declared this concept that immature poets borrow, mature poets steal, he was convinced that present and past must coexist in poetry, and for this reason we are fully entitled to consider him at the same time as the most influential poet and influenced at the same time. The most modern poet, but also the most traditional.

According to Eliot, a poet must draw inspiration and make an universal poetry.

STYLE OF WASTE LAND

It is fragmentary, this is evident from the structure of the poem itself, because although being a very long poem, it doesn't show the typical narrative structure of long poems. It seems more to be made up of a series of disjointed verse paragraphs and the reader cannot easily follow the story. There is the lack of an explicit link.

Secondly, it is fragmentary because of the mixture of different poetic styles, meant to reproduce the chaos of modern civilisation. The poem creates oppositions between different registers of speech.

The poem is also highly innovative in its use of language because its vocabulary is made up of words from several different languages, for example German , French, Latin, Sanskrit and of course English.

Another peculiarity in Eliot's style is the technique of implication: rather than using direct statements he preferred to use metaphors, similes, symbols, in order to evoke emotions. He adopted what he called the objective correlative: the attempt at conveying an emotion without a direct explicit statement. His style is evocative, he rejected an ideal poetry based on the poet's own personality and he used the objective correlative of symbolic meaningful imagery which forces the reader to contribute to the poem by bringing his own connotations to the gaps and his own meanings to the unstated.

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From the first section of the poem and it can be divided into two different parts:

- 1) line 1-7: first part of the poem
- 2) line 8-24: end of the poem's first section

It has an extraordinary complexity which breaks into many directions from its very beginning, in fact the poem starts with a reference to April as the cruellest month when the reader usually associates April as the season of renewal. Then he breaks again with the common view by saying that Winter, generally associated with cold temperatures, keeps human beings warm, it turns to be positive.

The second part contains one of the most surreal episodes of the poem, the speaker walks through London , mentioned by the expression 'unreal city', a reference to Baudelaire who used a similar expression to refer to Paris in one of his poems, London is the symbol of materialism, consumerism, because inhabited by creatures that look like walking ghosts, that stare and sight only in front of their feet. This is an idea of people who are totally absorbed by work that have lost the ability to communicate to each other. This image conveys an idea of death within life and lack of communication