

3. Organization Of Themes And Ideas In "The Waste Land"

The waste Land is undoubtedly one of the greatest poems of all times. In the modern age, the human mind could not present any poem comparable to the masterpiece essayed by Eliot. It is the epic of the modern age and presents a vivid and panoramic view of the anarchy prevalent in the contemporary civilization. It is a wonderful mixture of classicism and romanticism. It is a triumph of technique. And last but not the least it is an exposition of what poetry meant to Eliot.

The social and cultural disintegration of England and other European countries had a great influence on Eliot's mind, and it is in the Waste Land that he expresses his dissatisfaction on the harrowing state of affairs. The Waste Land depicts a cultural and spiritual waste land, a land populated by people who are, physically and emotionally, living a kind of death in the midst of their everyday lives.

**A crowd flowed over London Bridge. So many
I had not thought death had undone, so many.**

The people move across a desolate landscape of fragmentary images; they do not relate to one another. The many different voices we hear in the poem talk not to each other but past each other. There is no uniting belief.

To many of Eliot's contemporaries, the whole poem was written in the accent of its times — an unmistakably twentieth century post-war poem which records the collapse in the values of Western civilization. The main examples of this collapse are sterile unloving sexual relationships, cultural confusion and spiritual desolations. "Eliot sees the root of modern world's unhappiness and alienation, in the fact that people are unable to bring together the different areas of their experience to make a complete whole". Their social, sexual and religious experiences are fragmentary and ununified. It is a

civilization dying of spiritual drought occasioned by these very fragments. The fragments broken from the whole are all that twentieth century civilization has to interpret the world. At the end of the Waste Land, however, Eliot succeeds in suggesting that a spiritual whole can be created from the parts. Timeless values still exist and can be recovered. The wasteland can be regenerated and fragments from the past can be used to survive the ruins of a collapsed civilization

To depict such a fragmented society, he uses a technique of fragmentation. Instead of the traditional and poetic images of the pre-war poets, Eliot uses images that shock and bewilder. These are original and novel images, striking and obscure, drawn from a discordant urban rather than a harmonious rural life:

What is the city over the mountains

Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violent air.

**Falling towers Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria,
Vienna, London, Unreal.**

There is no doubt this kind of poetry is difficult to read. A main cause of difficulty for reader is that Eliot suppresses all kinds of direct connections between these images. The reader has to work hard to build up meanings without overt explanation from the poet. The reader has to rebuild the fragments by an indirect process of association.

Difficulties are created by Eliot's frequent quotations from and allusions to other works of foreign literature, languages and cultures. Many of these references are difficult to follow, require a specialized knowledge, or are simply highly personal to Eliot's own individual reading. The Waste Land contains end notes which Eliot supplies himself to explain some of the more cryptic references. For example, in the lines:

So of Man

You cannot say or guess, for you know only

A heap of broken images

The allusion to the son of Man' is taken from Bible (The Book of Ezekiel) and refers to God who addresses to Ezekiel direct. The 'broken images' are also the false ideals of Israel, which God has destroyed. Eliot achieves an ironic contrast by highlighting the differences between ancient and modern worlds.

The disintegration of the modern civilization is due to several causes which are mentioned by Eliot in this poem. These are:

- (a) Sexual perversion
- (b) Loss of faith and moral values
- (c) Lack of human relationships
- (d) Commercialization of life
- (e) Politics and war
- (f) Mental tension.

Eliot considers sex an important aspect of life. It is an expression of love and a means of reproduction. In the modern age, sex has been perverted from its proper function and is utilized for the animal pleasure and monetary benefits. It has become mechanical and a source of degeneration and disease. It has also led to the erosion of values and become a hurdle in man's spiritual progress. He cites the example of German princess in the first part of the poem. There is another instance of freedom of sex which he mentions in the career of Lady of Situations. Eliot sums up the story of European lust through the words of St Augustine:

To Cartage then I came

Burning, burning, burning, burning

He means that the whole of Europe is being destroyed by the fire of sexuality.

It is an undeniable fact that faith has always been the greatest source of inspiration. Earlier, the elderly people were revered. Character and saintliness were considered as important assets. In the modern age, Eliot laments the loss of these values. Money is the god of modern people. The Christians go

to church as a routine. Older people are hated. There is a wide gulf between profession and practice. Hypocrisy is at a great premium, morality at a sad discount, this has resulted in general deterioration of standard of life and yard sticks of reputation.

**A crowd flowed over London Bridge. So many
I had not thought death had undone, so many.**

In older times, people believed in intimated human relationships. There was the joint family system under which the resources were pooled and the needs of all were supplied. In olden times, there were certain loyalties to the community and nation. Such loyalties no longer exist. People have become Self- Centered and egoistic. Each one thinks only of himself and how he can gain at the expense of others. Exploitation is the order of the day. Eliot compares the modern man to Coriolanus — an embodiment of selfishness. Each one is imprisoned in his own self. The waste Landers have lost the key of human sympathy and brotherhood.

**We think of the key, each in his prison
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison.**

Life has become commercialized to such an extent that now money is the sole criterion of judgment. Mr. Eugenides is an example of modern businessman. He carries his contract, samples, documents, and transit business in the hotel. He also wants to enjoy life. He is fond of sex, especially homo - sex which is available in many hotels. Similarly, the company directors and the Executives hold picnic on the banks of the river Thames. They enjoy their leisure time with beautiful girls.

**And their friends, the loitering heirs of
City director**

Departed, have left no addresses.

Politicians have also contributed a great deal in the disintegration of the modern civilization. They have the power to wage war against other countries without consulting their own people. By their actions, they can bring untold miseries

upon their countrymen. Millions of people were affected by war directly. They had to wander as refugees in search of food and shelter. Their lamentation filled both plains and mountains.

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.

New political movement like October Revolution in 1917 shook the very foundations of European civilization.

The modern man suffers from various types of mental illness on account of the worries and anxieties, and the challenges of Modern life. When man is unable to face a challenging situation, he feels tense and frustrated. Similarly, sex, too becomes a source of tension, and despair. The fashionable society-woman called the lady of situation, is bored with her own life and has become extremely neurotic. Her lover too suffers from mental exhaustion. He says.

I think we are in rat's alley

Where the dead men lost their bones.

People do not know how to kill time. This, too, is a source of tension.

Eliot has quite deftly managed the account of spiritual chaos of European society after the First World War. Eliot presents the present chaos and establishes its relationship with similar periods in the history through the employment of the mythical method.

Points to Remember:

1. Major themes and ideas of "The Waste Land" include:
2. Social and cultural disintegration.
3. Eliot uses technique of fragmentation to depict this chaos.
4. Fire of sexuality .
5. Loss of faith and
6. Commercial attitude of people
7. Mental illness of modern man — worries and anxieties.
8. Thingification of man.



4. Eliot's Poetic Style

Eliot's expression in the *Waste Land* is a hard nut to crack. The poem is extremely rich in recondite symbolism and obscure references to ancient literature, mythology history. Instead of the traditional lyric rhythms and conventionally beautiful and poetic images and symbols, of the pre-war poets, Eliot employs images that shock and bewilder. These are original and novel images, striking and obscure, drawn from a discordant urban rather than a harmonious rural life.

Poetic shorthand is the hallmark of Eliot's poetry. Eliot compresses his impressions and ideas through poetic shorthand. It is a device which brings together places and events, history and legends, through the use of words and lines written by writers of different countries and times. After all, human experience is practically one and the same thing throughout the ages. Fashions may change and modes may alter, but human nature does not vary from time to time. All wars are due to human vanity and ambition all cities are alike; human civilizations have sprung up with the inspiration of great men and have decayed through the loss of moral values. London, called unreal city, represents life in different metropolitan cities like Athens, Alexandria and Vienna. The decay of culture, the vulgarity of city life the mechanical routine of the office workers are made common to all the big cities and acquire a universal significance. Similarly the use of quotations from and allusions to different books is a part of poetic shorthand.

Examples can be found in abundance. With this technique, the poem acquires a universal significance. The sounds of horns and motors bring up before the mind the sound of hunting horn of Diana in the forest an embodiment of purity and virginity. She is contrasted with Mrs. Porter calling her lover Sweeney with her motor horn. Similarly, the easy virtue

of the typist –girl stands in contrast with the remorse of the raped girl mentioned by Goldsmith in the Vicar of Wakefield.

Eliot employs many symbols which are universal. The recurrent mythical symbols are taken from the cycle of seasons. Winter stands for death, spring for re-birth, drought for spiritual barrenness, rain for spiritual re-birth and productivity. Rocks represent spiritual barrenness. It would be pertinent to mention that some of the mythical symbols used by Eliot have paradoxical nature. For instance, April, the month of spring is usually considered to be a symbol of spiritual regeneration but in the modern life of waste landers it is regarded as the cruellest month.

Fire also has double connotation. It stands, on the one hand, for lust which is destructive. Secondly it stands for purification and spiritual progress. Planting of corpse stands firstly for death and secondly for re- birth. Water is an agent of destruction as well as purification and production.

Eliot uses another rather astounding and bewildering category of symbols to convey the complex nature of modern city life. He uses these personal symbols in a very meaningful way. The 'dog' which digs the ground is a symbol of human conscience. Red- rock stands for Christian church which offers a place of refuge for the lost soul of man. Similarly, the images and patterns on the Tarot Pack of cards are entirely Eliot's own. He makes a reference to "a taxi throbbing waiting" which implies two things..... firstly, impatience for returning to her home and secondly her willingness to be hired as Taxi for sex purpose. The reason why Eliot employs such novel and striking symbols is not hard to discern— he deals with complex life and makes his style complex.' These novel symbols had a dimension to the originality of the technique of the poem.

Eliot uses certain symbols which have an extended significance. For example, the journey of the German princess to the different places stand, for rootlessness of modern persons, her visit to the South in winter symbolizes her love of

fun and sensuous pleasure. The Thames River full of oil and tar reveals the squalor and pollution of water. The well-known symbol of the rat's alley stands for the monotony and emptiness of the city life. The falling of the London Bridge does not refer to an accident, but is symbol of the political and spiritual decay of modern Europe. Reference to "jug jug" stands for indifference of the modern man to the inspiring and spiritual significance of the nightingale song. The typist's mechanical sex and the sex-act represent the indifference of modern people to sexual purity.

All the symbols stand for much more than what they represent. It is for the reader to understand their comprehensive significance.

Eliot believed that language must be renewed and revitalized. As a modern poet, he picks up current colloquial words and down-to-earth words of daily conversation. There is realism in his language when one compares it with the works of the romantic poets. Eliot, quite succinctly, sums up the famine scene "the jungle crouched, humped in silence."

Eliot draws largely on the works of other writers and weaves phrases and lines into the body of the waste Land. Sometimes he changes or modifies the words of other writers to fit it into the context. His style possesses literary flavour for the reader and reminds him of the words of the writers of past and present.

Lines from Dante's Divine comedy are scattered here and there, "I had not thought death has undone so many."

There is a quotation from St. Augustine's confessions.

To Carthage then I came

Burning, burning, burning, burning

Eliot was a painstaking poet who revised his language from time to time. He particularly selected words for their economy and adequacy and most of them appear inevitable in their context. One cannot replace them without damaging the sense and rhythm. Some of the words are quite suggestive and

fun and sensuous pleasure. The Thames River full of oil and tar reveals the squalor and pollution of water. The well-known symbol of the rat's alley stands for the monotony and emptiness of the city life. The falling of the London Bridge does not refer to an accident, but is symbol of the political and spiritual decay of modern Europe. Reference to "jug jug" stands for indifference of the modern man to the inspiring and spiritual significance of the nightingale song. The typist's mechanical sex and the sex-act represent the indifference of modern people to sexual purity.

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have rich associations, for example, the words 'synthetic perfumes'. Similarly, the pollution of the river Thames is brought out very vividly in the following lines.

The river sweats

Oil and tar

Equally suggestive is the portrait of the typist girl.

Turned upward from the desk, when the human engine waits

Like a taxi throbbing waiting.

The mechanical routine of the modern life is echoed in the Barmoids shout.

Hurry up please its Time.

Eliot shows the film technique in representing scenes from the ancient world and modern life. He builds up a sequence of pictures from the parts of a scene, rather than giving a scene from beginning to end. He also recalls previous scenes from memory. This is called Montage in technical language. There is no time sequence or logical connection between one picture and another. One picture fades out in the next feedings and moods fade into one another.

Eliot pinpoints the distortion of values in the modern age through ironic contrast. The banks of the river Thames were once full of nymphs, their sports or songs, but now they are full of young girls for having a good time with their lovers. Mrs. Porter waits for Sweeney. There is an ironic comment on the attitude to sex and female chastity. In the past, the loss of virginity led to suicide. Goldsmith's heroine in the Vicar of Wakefield contemplates death after her seduction. In the modern age, sexual enjoyment by unmarried girls is recognized as a routine relaxation. The past and present are brought together and the contrast is suggested by implication rather than collaboration.

Eliot's irony is inherent in the very structure of the poem. The parallelism between the past and the present are brought out either by contrast or by comparison. When the

world of past is placed side by side with the present, the difference between the two becomes obvious. The three wastelands.....Biblical, King Fisher's, king Oedipus'.... have points of similarity and points of dissimilarity with the modern wasteland. Different periods of history are telescoped right from the pre- historic times, through Egyptian and Greek civilizations to Renaissance and down to our twentieth century.

To sum up with a critic:"the poem is an enormously complex one, making great demands upon the reader, yet the importance of its theme and the éclat of its technique give it rank as one of the most significant literary works of our times".

وقل رب زدني علما

PUACP

Points to Remember:

1. Eliot employs complex style to describe the complexities of modern man.
2. Compresses his ideas through the use of symbols.
3. Language he employed is of daily use.
4. References from other writers / poets.
5. Use of film technique.
6. Use of irony.
7. Conclusion.



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5. "The Waste Land" As A Sordid Picture Of Modern Civilization

It would not be wrong to say that "The Waste Land" is a vision of desolation and spiritual drought. Indeed, it is a record of disillusionment of modern generation that describes the spiritual disease i.e spiritual sterility and lack of faith and character of the age. It is the universal tragedy of man because the idea of unreality and death pervade the whole poem.

"The waste Land" shows the disillusionment and dissatisfaction of the so called progressed Europe. Though in this modern age scientific achievement and industrial progress held a sway but it morally crushed all the values. So this poem reflects a sordid picture of life—a picture made up of broken fragments of idle conversation. This sordidness and sterility of the modern age can be seen in the opening lines of the poem:

And

What are the roots that clutch what branches grow,
Out of this stony rubbish?

We note that the idea of sterility and death pervade the whole poem as it tells us that nothing can grow from this sterile civilization, from these unreal great cities where the living seem already dead because they are spiritually dead. The denizens of "The waste Land" do not like to be disturbed from their stupor or the futile routine of the modern life. Here in this Waste Land any idea of spiritual regeneration is painful to them. e.g. April is cruel month for them because it reminds them of their spiritual decay and makes them think of regeneration while winter, which is symbol of decay and death pleases them.

"April is the cruellest month, breeding

.....
Winter kept us warm covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.

Certainly for the Waste-Landers winter is a season for the joys of the flesh. For the modern man who is spiritually dead, winter stands for a life of comfort and of physical joy when the spiritual and moral values are dead and forgotten. Moreover, the wilderness describes the chaos in "The Waste Land". It is symbol of the spiritual barrenness where nothing grows out. The civilization with its values and conventions is dead and gone leaving only a heap of broken images so all these presents a sordid view of life where death and unreality pervade.

Moreover, the barrenness of city life in modern civilization has been described through the reference of cities like London, Paris and Amsterdam. All these are unreal cities for the routine of office—goers and workers is dead and dull. Hence it shows the futility and the emptiness of the modern civilization. The life of these workers is mechanical and they don't have any liking for God and religion. Their commercial life is entirely different from the world of God. Their soul has deadened by their boring and unspiritual routine. Here business and spirituality cannot go together. Though science and communism have made man's life materially well, but they have marred/killed man's soul. Surely a man cannot live by bread alone. He definitely needs something spiritual. But under these circumstances spiritual regeneration is a very distant possibility.

Moreover, modern societies' lust and rape are also manifested in this barren land. They are also responsible for corruption and decay of modern society which is going dead and dead gradually. This degeneration prevails in all the classes of society — the upper, middle and lower classes. So how can the idea of reality and regeneration are nourished here? Indeed, the idea of unreality and death pervade the whole poem and presents a sordid picture of modern civilization.

Points to Remember:

1. The Waste Land embodies spiritual sterility, disillusionment loss of faith and lust for wealth/material gains of modern man.



6. Eliot's Use Of Mythology

All the problems as well as the psychology of the mankind have been same throughout the ages, so in order to show a bondage, an assimilation, likeness and a relation between the past and present, Eliot uses the literary method of using mythology in his writings. He tells us that the successful solutions tried in the past can be used to establish "a parallel" between the ancient world and the modern world. In a way by the use of mythology, he wants to prove that we can profit by the experiences and wisdom of the past and can get a chance of our survival. The past shows that there have been periods of spiritual decay. A kingdom has been laid waste either by the sins of rulers or by the havoc caused by the war but the land has been restored to prosperity and health by the sufferings and penance of the rulers.

Eliot has clarified his concept of mythical method from two books—Jessie Weston's "From Ritual to Romance" and James Frazer's "The Golden Bough". To him, the essence of mythical method lies in establishing a parallel between the past and the present. The comparison and contrast between the myths of the past and solution in modern world bring out the meaning he wants to convey. It would be more right to say that he indirectly expresses his comments through the myths.

In order to make use of mythology, he uses objective co-relatives. According to him objective co-relative is a set of objects, situations and a chain of events which shall be formula for some particular emotions of the poet. To him an objective co-relative is the only link and the correct way of one's emotions in art. He believes that the appeal of all poetry lies in power not to speak, but to speak the truth. As Milton uses the story of Samson as an objective co-relative for expressing his emotions, so Eliot uses ancient myth and legends both Christian and non Christian as objective co-relative. For example, in his *Waste Land*, the protagonist, Tiresias serves as

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a unifying linkage between the past and the present. He imparts a sense of unity to the poem as he belongs to the past and the present. He is link between the waste Land of king Oedipus and the Waste Land of modern civilization. Moreover, he has the experience of life both as woman and man. Though physically blind he is gifted with prophetic vision, so like an enlightened commentator, through the stream of consciousness method he reflects on the events of the past and the present and sees a lot of resemblance between them. He mixes the past with the present and through symbols the distance of time and space is destroyed. According to Hugh Canner, "He is a relic of the past and an inhabitant of the present, at once a prophet and detached spectator of the agonizing drama of contemporary history and a participator and fallow- sufferer with a superior insight into the meaning of the ghostly masquerade miscalled "human life".

Psychologically speaking, he is a conscience of humanity banished and disowned by thoughtless men and women, but still strong enough to prick the bubbles of their illusions, joys, hopes and fears. In short, Tiresias is a comprehensive symbol of prophetic commendation who gives his impressions and comments on the present day world. According to Eliot Tiresias though a mere spectator and not indeed a character is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rests and the two sexes meeting in him.

For his mythological presentation, Eliot uses the symbols of nature. For example, he uses winter as the symbol of death and spring as a symbol of re-birth. It means that the mythology of vegetation and fertility deepens its roots in Eliot's writing. For example in his "Waste Land" the Egyptian mythology of the vegetation god has been referred in "the Burial of the Dead". It seems that the effigy of the vegetation god appeared in the first section of the poem gets its rebirth in the spring season. We can also find a reference of this myth in the section entitled "Death by water". He also uses Christian

mythology when he describes the pattern of death and birth. This mythological reference echoes the crucifixion of Christ and his resurrection. In reality, a spiritual death is the result of sin and spiritual regeneration comes through penance and suffering. Indeed the resurrection of Christ is a symbol of man's survival and prosperity.

Moreover, in the myth of the king Fisher's "Waste Land" the sick king stands for the sick humanity. As the sickness of Fisher was due to sexual orgies, so in the same way, sickness of the modern men is due to their sexual perversities.

Eliot believes that there is still a hope for the survival of modern civilization. The modern sick world can be restored to help through penance and the pursuit of virtues.

Eliot's this "Waste Land" has a close resemblance with Biblical waste land. Undoubtedly, it refers to the land of Ammaus where prophet Ezekiel told them to worship God and to give up idolatry so that the waste Land may become fertile. Moreover we also find many Biblical references in his "Waste Land". In the words like "the rock, the dead, tree, the day grass," etc. These stand for the barrenness of the sterility of spirit i.e. a sort of death in life.

In conclusion we may say that Eliot deliberately chooses the mythical method for obvious advantages. It helps in concretising a parallelism between the crisis in human history and civilization, but also gives a sense of the continuity of time and human consciousness e.g. the spiritual wisdom and lesson, derived from ancient tradition and culture; furnish a clue to the survival of modern civilization. With the help of these mythological references, Eliot offers a comprehensive solution to the problems of the modern age and the reader does not find any difficulty to apply it to the present situation.

Points to Remember:

1. Eliot's theory of poetry — object co-relative.
2. Eliot's use of symbols.
3. Biblical and other old mythological references.



7. Eliot's Use of Symbolism And Imagery In 'The Wasteland'

In literature, many devices are used to enhance the affectivity of the material. Among these literary devices, symbolism is the one. According to the definition: The presentation to invest objects, actions, moods or ideas through the medium of symbols is called symbolism. A symbol is something standing for something else. For example, the rose is a symbol of beauty; a lion is a symbol of courage and strength. Symbolism imparts a deeper layer of meaning to a work of literature while the apparent meaning lies deeper, almost hidden from view. Symbolism heightens the emotional effect of a remark, situation, a piece of description or a character.

In order to make his matter meaningful and vivid, Eliot uses a very handy method of symbolism that enables him to use myths and images and with this usage he compresses his ideas and impressions in a shorthanded way. He symbolises the modern decay of culture, the vulgarity of city life and the mechanical routine life with the old human experience because all the experiences are one and the same throughout the ages. merely the names, places, events and, fashions alter, but the story remains the same. For example, the story of the unreal city London represents life in different metropolitan cities like Athens, Alexandria and Vienna. As, we find in the following lines:

**"What is the city over the mountain
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
Falling towers
Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria
Vienna, London
unreal."**

Such a life is common to all the cities and to all the men but note how beautifully Eliot symbolises the hunting and rushing life of the dwellers of the unreal city when he says:

..... Unreal city

Under the brown of a winter dawn

A crowd flowed over London bridge so many

Lights. Short and infrequent, were exhaled.....

With a dead sound."

"The Waste Land" is a fine glaring piece littered with a plenty of symbols. For instance, there are found every sort of symbols in it, i.e.; mythical symbols, unusual symbols, extended symbols, stock, personal symbols and sometimes symbols in the form of quotations and allusions are also present. In "The Waste Land" we get a record of all the above mentioned symbols. For example, Mythical symbols have been taken from the cycles of seasons. In this poem, Winter stands for death, decay and destruction. It is also a symbol of spiritual death for the joys of the flesh get their roots strongly deeper in this season. Spring stands for re-birth. Life gets revived in this season and the plants and flowers start blossoming.

Moreover, spring also serves as a linkage, as an ankle in the chain of seasons. It joins the past, present and the future. "The Draught" symbolises "the spiritual bareness", while the "rain" symbolises "spiritual re-birth", and "productivity". Rocks represent the spiritual bareness for they signify spiritual decay and death through dry bones. In "The Waste Land" fire stands for destruction as well as purification and spiritual progress. Like the purgative flames, it is a mean/source of purification. Similarly water stands for death as well as regeneration. On the one hand, it is an agent of destruction; while on the other hand, it is a source of purification and production. Moreover, Fishing stands for spiritual re-birth and re-generation. Undoubtedly, use of symbols adds charms and dignity to the clarity and significance of the poem.

In order to present his ideas, themes and thoughts in a meaningful way Eliot uses his own personal symbols. For instance, when he says:

**"O keep the dog far hence,
That's friend to men.**

Or with his nails hell dig it up again."

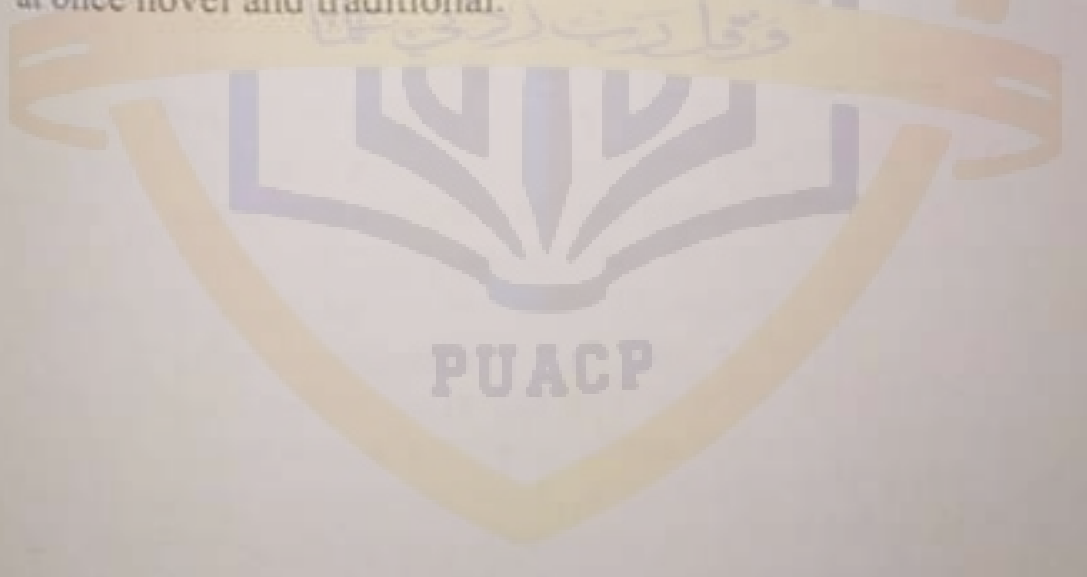
Here the word "dog" refers to spiritual awareness or faith that awakes human conscious. So, it is a symbol of human conscious. This word "dog" may also refer to 'The Dog Star-Sirius' — which symbolises the rise of the Nile water and bring fertility to the soil. This word "dog" has another symbolic meaning that refers to forces and philosophies of modern world. For example, Science and Communism.

"Red Rock" stands for Christian Church/kirk which offers a place of refuge for the lost soul of man. "Broken Coriolanus" stands for moment of inspiration. Similarly, we also find that the images and patterns on Trait Packof card are entirely Eliot's own. Indeed, there is an exuberant and diverse variety of symbols presented in "The Waste Land" and some of them are invented from the facts of modern life. For instance, when Eliot refers to "a throbbing" between two lines' and "a taxi throbbing waiting" them, he symbolises two things— firstly impatience for returning home and secondly her willingness to be hired as "taxi" for sex purpose. These few symbols give a new dimension to the originality of the technique of the poem.

Extended symbols are also found in this poem with their extended significance. For instance, the journey of German Princes to the different places stands for the routelessness of modern person. Her visit to the south in winter stands for her love of fun and sensuous pleasure. The symbol of "Rats Alley" stands for the monotony and emptiness of the city life. And the famous falling of the London Bridge is symbol of the political and spiritual decay of modern Europe. All these symbols stand for much more than what they represent.

It would be right to say that Eliot has a matchless gift of using symbolic interpretations in his writings. It seems that his powerful pen was not filled with an ink but with symbolism that spreads on every line and on every page. He got the idea of using symbols from the French symbolists like Ezra Pound and T.E.Hulme etc. But he was extremely allusive and deliberately vague or ambiguous in his use of symbols but his this quality has made him a symbolist of high calibre. This symbolism springs from the nature of his own objects and from his state of mind and from those experiences which are difficult to describe. George William rightly says:

"This acute perception of similarity and difference between the same things, his mixed use of the intellectual wits and symbolism is common in metaphysical poetry. This awareness and usage of symbols make him lively and different, at once novel and traditional."



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Points to Remember:

1. Definition of symbolism.
2. Eliot's use of symbols — comparison of the old and the new to produce a heightened effect.
3. Symbol of London city presents decaying life in the modern age.
4. Mythical symbols — Seasons, fire, water, fishing, life, death etc.
5. Extended symbols — journey of German Princess, Rats Alley, falling of London Bridge.
6. Conclusion.

وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْنِي عَالِيَا

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8. The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock (Critical Appreciation)

This poem, the earliest of Eliot's major works, was completed in 1910 or 1911 but not published until 1915. It is an examination of the tortured psyche of the prototypical modern man—overeducated, eloquent, neurotic, and emotionally stilted. Prufrock, the poem's speaker, seems to be addressing a potential lover, with whom he would like to "force the moment to its crisis" by somehow consummating their relationship. But Prufrock knows too much of life to "dare" an approach to the woman: In his mind he hears the comments others make about his inadequacies, and he chides himself for "presuming" emotional interaction could be possible at all. The poem moves from a series of fairly concrete (for Eliot) physical settings—a cityscape (the famous "patient etherised upon a table") and several interiors (women's arms in the lamplight, coffee spoons, fireplaces)—to a series of vague ocean images conveying Prufrock's emotional distance from the world as he comes to recognize his second-rate status ("I am not Prince Hamlet"). "Prufrock" is powerful for its range of intellectual reference and also for the vividness of character achieved.

Another interpretation of the situation in which Prufrock has been shown is that he is nervous because he feels that in a world where higher love has already become dead, how he would express his feelings. In the modern world love has become equal to sexual hunger which is very easy to consummate. But the higher love, pure and romantic love which we find in the poetry of Keats and Wordsworth is no more there. Prufrock, therefore, finds himself in a fix when he thinks about the reaction of his lady love. This is the cause of his nervousness.

"Prufrock" is a variation on the dramatic monologue, a type of poem popular with Eliot's predecessors. Dramatic

monologues are similar to soliloquies in plays. Three things characterize the dramatic monologue, according to M.H. Abrams. First, they are the utterances of a specific individual (not the poet) at a specific moment in time. Secondly, the monologue is specifically directed at a listener or listeners whose presence is not directly referenced but is merely suggested in the speaker's words. Third, the primary focus is the development and revelation of the speaker's character. Eliot modernizes the form by removing the implied listeners and focusing on Prufrock's interiority and isolation. In its focus on character and its dramatic sensibility, "Prufrock" anticipates Eliot's later, dramatic works.

The rhyme scheme of this poem is irregular but not random. While sections of the poem may resemble free verse, in reality, "Prufrock" is a carefully structured amalgamation of poetic forms. The bits and pieces of rhyme become much more apparent when the poem is read aloud. One of the most prominent formal characteristics of this work is the use of refrains. Prufrock's continual return to the "women [who] come and go / Talking of Michelangelo" and his recurrent questionings ("how should I presume?") and pessimistic appraisals ("That is not it, at all.") help Eliot describe the consciousness of a modern, neurotic individual. Prufrock's obsessiveness is aesthetic, but it is also a sign of compulsiveness and isolation. Another important formal feature is the use of fragments of sonnet form, particularly at the poem's conclusion. The three three-line stanzas are rhymed as the conclusion of a Petrarchan sonnet would be, but their pessimistic, anti-romantic content, coupled with the despairing interjection, "I do not think they (the mermaids) would sing to me," creates a contrast that comments bitterly on the bleakness of modernity.

"Prufrock" displays the two most important characteristics of Eliot's early poetry. First, it is strongly influenced by the French Symbolists, like Mallarmé, Rimbaud,

and Baudelaire, whom Eliot had been reading almost constantly while writing the poem. From the Symbolists, Eliot takes his sensuous language and eye for unnerving or anti-aesthetic detail that nevertheless contributes to the overall beauty of the poem (the yellow smoke and the hair-covered arms of the women are two good examples of this). The Symbolists, too, privileged the same kind of individual Eliot creates with Prufrock: the moody, urban, isolated-yet-sensitive thinker. However, whereas the Symbolists would have been more likely to make their speaker himself a poet or artist, Eliot chooses to make Prufrock an unacknowledged poet, a sort of artist for the common man.

The second defining characteristic of this poem is its use of fragmentation and juxtaposition. Eliot sustained his interest in fragmentation and its applications throughout his career, and his use of the technique changes in important ways across his body of work: In *The Waste Land*, it is modern culture that splinters; in the *Four Quartets* we find the fragments of attempted philosophical systems. Eliot's use of bits and pieces of formal structure suggests that fragmentation, although anxiety-provoking, is nevertheless productive; had he chosen to write in free verse, the poem would have seemed much more nihilistic. The kinds of imagery Eliot uses also suggest that something new can be made from the ruins. Eliot also introduces an image that will recur in his later poetry, that of the scavenger. Prufrock thinks that he "should have been a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas." Crabs are scavengers, garbage-eaters who live off refuse that makes its way to the sea floor. Eliot's discussions of his own poetic technique (see especially his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent") suggest that making something beautiful out of the refuse of modern life, as a crab sustains and nourishes itself on garbage, may, in fact, be the highest form of art. At the very least, this notion subverts romantic ideals about art; at best, it suggests that fragments may become reintegrated,

that art may be in some way therapeutic for a broken modern world. In *The Waste Land*, crabs become rats, and the optimism disappears, but here Eliot seems to assert only the limitless potential of scavenging.

"*Prufrock*" ends with the hero assigning himself a role in one of Shakespeare's plays: While he is no Hamlet, he may yet be useful and important as "an attendant lord, one that will do / To swell a progress, start a scene or two..." This implies that there is still continuity between Shakespeare's world and ours, that Hamlet is still relevant to us and that we are still part of a world that could produce something like Shakespeare's plays. Implicit in this, of course, is the suggestion that Eliot, who has created an "attendant lord," may now go on to create another Hamlet. While "*Prufrock*" ends with a devaluation of its hero, it exalts its creator. The last line of the poem suggests otherwise—that when the world intrudes, when "human voices wake us," the dream is shattered: "we drown." With this single line, Eliot dismantles the romantic notion that poetic genius is all that is needed to triumph over the destructive, impersonal forces of the modern world. In reality, Eliot the poet is little better than his creation; He differs from *Prufrock* only by retaining a bit of hubris, which shows through from time to time. Eliot's poetic creation, thus, mirrors *Prufrock*'s soliloquy. Both are an expression of aesthetic ability and sensitivity that seems to have no place in the modern world. This realistic, anti-romantic outlook sets the stage for Eliot's later works, including *The Waste Land*.

Points to Remember:

1. Background of the poem.
2. Cause of Prufrock's nervousness.
3. The poem as a monologue.
4. The structure/ rhyme scheme of the poem.
5. Influence of French symbolists.
6. Use of fragmentation and juxtaposition.
7. Interpretation of "Hamlet" lines.

