

Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things. (T.S.Eliot, *Tradition and the Individual Talent* in *The Sacred Wood*, 1920)

### T. S. Eliot – “The Waste Land” (1922)

"Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego  
ipse oculis meis vidi in ampulla  
pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent:  
Σίβυλλα τί θέλεις; respondebat illa:  
ἀποθανεῖν θέλω."

Then with my own eyes I saw the sibyl  
suspended in a glass bottle at Cumae,  
and when the boys said to her:  
"Sibyl, what do you want?" she answered:  
"I want to die"

Petronio, Satyricon

For Ezra Pound  
*Il miglior fabbro*

- Epigraph: short quotation used to preface a work
- Sibyl: oracle granted perpetual life by the god Apollo [as many years of life as the grains of sand she had in her hands]. BUT she was NOT granted PERPETUAL YOUTH, so she grew older and she shrank so much that she was put in a glass bottle. The Sybil is timeless, yet she is caught in a "human type trap": she ages BUT CANNOT DIE. If she cannot die she cannot be reborn.  
So she is REMOVED both from the cycle of time and from the cycle of birth / death / rebirth
- The Sybil is the first prophetess of the poem. She belongs to the ancient world yet her comment throws light on the present day (mythical method)
- "MYTHICAL METHOD" (also defined inter-textual): quotations / allusions / cross-references with different texts that are integrated in the composition. The result will be a very complex vision concentrated in a few lines, a poem full of symbolic translation so that a simple outline will be UNIVERSALIZED. The result will be that the poem can be read as an amazing COMPRESSION of the WORLD'S CULTURE. This process moreover demonstrates the weight of our past culture and tradition [see the value of the PAST]. Again, the juxtaposition gives the poem a fragmentary structure that can be seen as a counterpart of the situation of the western civilization as well as of the fragmentary condition of human consciousness. As a result, we have a MAGNIFICENT PAST countered with / set against the squalor and the decline of the human values in the Waste Land, against the impoverishment and the degradation of our culture. This opposition emphasizes the squalor, the dreariness, the bleakness of our reality.  
Eliot starts from the evaluation of the Western culture and goes back to its origin to better understand modern society. He analysed legends and myths as symptoms of spiritual attitudes he considered extremely important in human culture. He realized that old myths have lost their deep meaning, they have been betrayed in modern society.  
The ALLUSIONS to the ARTHURIAN LEGEND is used to underline, to stress the fact that our civilization has become meaningless, exhausted, sterile and waste.
- PETRONIUS (died AD 66): author of the late Roman Empire. He wrote of the VULGARITY / DECADENCE of the period. Example of this decadence is Trimalchio's banquet. It is here that the story of the Sibyl is narrated. Trimalchio transforms the epic into the grotesque/ comic. In fact the prophetess is transformed into an attraction of a village fair. She is the tired relic of a past judged by a vulgar present. She passes from the cave of Avernus to a cage / glass bottle. From Aeneas' crucial question about the future of Rome, she passes to a question about herself (miniaturized).
- OUTLINE: 12 hour period of a single day (literal time changes: ll. 61 dawn - 208 noon - 220 evening): it deals with the experience that drives the character to a fortune teller where the fortune is told. Then we have the unfolding of fortune. All this follows the technique of the stream of consciousness.
- Extra-ordinem note: - the title, the plan and a good deal of the symbolism refer to the QUEST of the HOLY GRAIL  
central figure: a maimed / wounded King. Symbolically or explicitly the wound refers to a sexual maiming that is the cause of the BARRENESS in HIS LAND  
Only the blood of Christ's crucified body caught in the CUP used by Christ during the last supper COULD RESTORE LIFE in his KINGDOM  
Only a pure knight must undertake the QUEST, reach the chapel perilous and learn to ask the right questions about the Grail  
This myth was the object of the work written by JESSIE WESTON'S "FROM RITUAL TO ROMANCE" (1920)

- Before this work, another important work dealt with the origin of the rites of fertility, JAMES FRAZER'S "THE GOLDEN BOUGH"(1890). He had indicated that the pattern DEATH / REBIRTH of CHRIST falls in the PATTERN of the ANCIENT PAGAN FERTILITY RITES

So we have the overlapping of ancient ritual system that at a lower level were rites of initiation to the mysteries of generation and a higher level of initiation to the Spiritual Divine Life, where man is made one with God. So physical life overlaps with spiritual life: on the one side the CUP and the SPEAR, symbols of female and male elements necessary for regeneration, and the same title "Fisher King" contains the word "FISH" representative of water, at the basis of all forms of life. On the other, Christ as symbol of a spiritual new life and the FISH that is so closely linked to the early Christian Church

- EZRA POUND(1885-1972): "The better craftsman"

Pound's suggestions: to tighten the organization of the poem; to remove some personal elements; to avoid uselessly decorative "rhetoric" and replace it with CLEAR PRECISE IMAGES using the minimum number of words: these are the principles of IMAGISM.

"In a Station of the Metro"

*The apparition of these faces in the crowd;*

*Petals on a wet, black bough.*

- "Il Miglior Fabbro": cfr. *Divine Comedy*, Purgatory XXVI / 117. Dante applauded the mastery of a Provençal poet D.ARNAUT.

Eliot turned to DANTE as a model for all poetic art and establishes a relationship between the MEDIEVAL INFERNO and MODERN LIFE

## Section I *The Burial of the Dead* p. 583

1. April is the cruellest month, breeding
2. Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
3. Memory and desire, stirring
4. Dull roots with spring rain.
5. Winter kept us warm, covering
6. Earth in forgetful snow. feeding
7. A little life with dried tubers.

### I La Sepoltura Dei Morti.

Aprile è il più crudele di tutti i mesi. Genera  
lillà dalla terra morta, mescola  
memoria e desiderio, desta  
radici sopite con pioggia di primavera.  
L'inverno ci tenne al caldo, coprendo  
la terra di neve immemore, nutrendo  
una piccola vita con tuberi secchi.

### 1st Part (lines 1 -7)

Possible title: **The coming of Spring in a sterile land**

The title recalls the **Egyptian ritual of Osiris in spring** (<http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osiris> - <http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isis>). At the same time it recalls the central theme of **death / resurrection of Christ** of the Holy Week. (cf. Frazer's "The Golden Bough" (1890) and J. Weston's "From Ritual to Romance" (1920))

It suggests the research of a **new meaning of LIFE** and **DEATH** that is the central theme of *The Waste Land* where man is unable to live because it **requires to die to our old way of being and rebirth that implies suffering** (cf. the Sybil in the Epigraph)

Eliot introduces here the **antithesis** between **water** (symbol of **fertility**) and **dryness** (symbol of **sterility**) that will be the pivot of the whole poem.

The aspects of **Spring** singled out as being "cruel" are a) "**breeding**" lilacs (lines 1-2) since **existence is painful** so **generating new life is cruel**; b) "**mixing**" memory and desire (lines 2-3): **any act of consciousness is seen as painful**, a longing (future) for what men no longer have (past). The "-ing" form is the translation of the moment of fusion of the three time dimensions when any act of consciousness takes place. c) "**stirring**" dull roots with spring rain (lines 3-4): **bringing life to dead things is considered negative**.

In other words, cruelty coexists in every rebirth, in any new identity that throbs in the fibres of the old one that clings to its sterility not to die.

**Instead of the ETERNAL JOYOUS RETURN of LIFE, APRIL is seen as AGONY and a PAINFUL OBSESSION.**

Also the description of **winter** contradict traditional views: it **turns out to be positive** since it **allows men to live in peace and to forget** (lines 5-6). Winter is seen as a comfortable season, **because** it maintains a MINIMAL LIFE where ACTION is NOT NECESSARY.

60. Unreal City,
61. Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
62. A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
63. I had not thought death had undone so many.
64. Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
65. And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
66. Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
67. To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
68. With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.
69. There I saw one I knew, and stopped him crying: Stetson!
70. 'You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!
71. 'That **corpse** you planted last year in your garden,
72. 'Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
73. 'Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
74. 'Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,
75. 'Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!
76. 'You! hypocrite lecteur! - mon semblable, - mon frère!

Città irreale,  
sotto la nebbia scura di un'alba d'inverno  
una folla fluiva su London Bridge, tanta  
che io non avrei creduto che morte tanta ne avesse disfatta.  
Sospiri, corti e rari, ne esalavano  
e ognuno andava con gli occhi fissi davanti ai piedi.  
Fluivano su per il colle e giù per King William Street,  
fino a dove Saint Mary Woolnoth segnava le ore  
con suono morto sull'ultimo rintocco delle nove.  
Là vidi un tale che conoscevo e lo fermai gridando:  
"Stetson!  
"Tu che eri con me sulle navi a Mylae!  
"quel cadavere che l'anno scorso hai piantato in giardino,  
"ha cominciato a germogliare? Fiorirà quest'anno?  
"O il gelo improvviso ha danneggiato l'aiuola?  
"O tieni il Cane lontano, che è amico dell'uomo,  
"O con le unghie lo disseppellirà di nuovo!  
"Tu! *hypocrite lecteur! - mon semblable - mon frère!*"

## 2nd Part (*Unreal city*) - possible title: "Degradation of life in a big city"

The **office workers' life** is linked to the **theme of death within life** (line 63) and to their **inability of communicating** (line 65).

It is another significant detail illustrating the frustration and sterility of routine for office workers in the city.

Notice the **contrast** between the **realistic precision** of the setting [time: winter dawn / place: London Bridge - King William Street - Saint Mary Woolnoth] opposed to the definition of "**UNREAL**":

A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many, I had not thought death had undone so many. Reference to Dante's *Hell* (III, 55-57): "...sì lunga tratta / di gente, ch'io non avea mai creduto / che morte tanta n'avesse disfatta"

Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled, And each man fixed his eyes before his feet. Reference to Dante's *Hell*, IV, 25-27: "Quivi, secondo che per ascoltare, (per quel che si poteva ascoltare, essendo la vista impedita dalle tenebre) / non avea pianto, ma' che di sospiri, / che l'aura eterna facevan tremare"

the objective is to **underline the lifeless, soulless quality of the life** in town and its automaton-like inhabitants.

The same choice of words like *fog, flowed, sighs* contributes to the vagueness of men and landscape: it is not easy to distinguish one individual from another.

Moreover the general atmosphere conveys an **idea of sadness**, depression, dejection, hopelessness.

**Stetson:** he represents the present. Also Dante isolates one figure: Celestino V° (the pope of "gran rifiuto") - III canto of *Hell* – the faint-hearted

When the speaker mentions the "**ships at Mylae**" (line 70), he is associating himself to the past (1st Punic War fought by the Romans against the Carthaginians (260 BC). In fact, according to T.S. Eliot, **all wars are equal** because **history** is nothing but the **repetition** of the **same events**. Here Eliot conveys the idea of the **collective guilt of any war**.

Following the same modality, the **corpse** symbolises the **corpses of any war** as well as death itself.

The question 'Has it begun to sprout?' establishes a **comparison** between the **modern ritual of office workers** with **earlier ceremonies and fertility rites**.

The reference is reinforced in the following lines, in fact "**Dog**" is written with a capital letter since it recalls Sirius the Dog Star that appears at dawn during the Summer solstice when the Nile begins to rise. It is considered the Goddess of life (ISIS) that comes to wake her lover – OSIRIS – from the DEAD. In Eliot's *The Waste Land* the Dog must be kept "far hence, that's friend to men, Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!": **we are afraid of rebirth**.

Then the poet **turns directly to the reader** calling him "mon semblable -mon frere" since **he experiences his same world**. The reader **shares with the poet the sin of ENNUI** / boredom - alienation - spiritual emptiness, that is the **sin of the inhabitants of the Waste Land** as well as of most people in modern civilization.

If we concentrate on how the lines are organised we realize that they have **no regular rhyme scheme**, that the metre is not traditional, that there is no classical division in stanzas, that the lines are not of the same length. To make up for the lack of these traditional devices in FREE VERSE there are **alliterations** (e.g. winter/warm (line 5), forgetful/feeding (line 6), who/were/with (line 70) and **repetitions** of sounds and words (*dead* is repeated in lines 2 (1<sup>st</sup> part, *dead land*) and 68 (2<sup>nd</sup> part, *dead sound*). They reinforce the idea of spiritual death characterising the XX century world. Again, the atmosphere they create is alienating and sterile.

Eliot's use of symbols, contrasts, together with the numerous interruptions in the narrative level and the many levels of reading or the quotations from other literatures, made the poem complex and demanding. It is a series of SNATCHES OF DIALOGUES REMEMBERED, a long STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS. Its principal "actions" occur in the mind of the speaker, rather than in the "real" world, through FREE ASSOCIATIONS OF IDEAS. "Any **obscurity** in the poem is due to the **suppression of 'links in the chain'**, of explanatory and connecting matter, and not to incoherence, or love of the cryptogram. The justification of such abbreviation of

method is that the **sequence of images** coincides and **concentrates** into one **intense impression**" that forces the reader to enter the dimension past/present/future/no-time." (Eliot's introduction, Saint-John Perse's "Anabase")

(cfr. p. 664-665 "**The new concept of history**" in Lit & Lab) In his "Tradition and the Individual Talent" he says: "The historical sense involves a perception not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; [... see p. 665] This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead artists. What happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens **SIMULTANEOUSLY** to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art towards the whole are readjusted; and **THIS IS THE CONFORMITY BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW**. [According to this idea] the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. And the poet who is aware of this will be aware of great difficulties and responsibilities."

The combination of these fragments, of these speaking voices, contributes to the creation of that "set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula for that "particular emotion such that, when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked" (**objective correlative**) the poet wants to convey. The poet does not mention the emotion but describes the objects in such a precise way as to express the emotion more forcefully.

E.g. there is **G. Chaucer** behind the **paradox of the seasons** that inverts the normal attitude towards the life-cycle making the inhabitants of this land fear the return to life. There is **Baudelaire** behind the "unreal city" where its people are not able to communicate to each other and they look like corpses. There is **Dante** behind this modern Inferno. There is the transformation of **John Webster's dirge** (1580 - 1625) from "Oh keep the **wolf** far hence, that's **foe** to man" into "dog" and "friend". There is again **Baudelaire's "Fleurs du Mal"** ("**Flowers of Evils**") behind the desperate cry of line 76. All the different images and characters represent the **objective correlative of the sterility of the present spiritual sterility**.

The Italian poet **Eugenio Montale** (1896-1981) in his collection *Ossi di seppia* (1925) expressed the negativity of the contemporary human experience of living.

Eugenio Montale, like T.S. Eliot, expressed a universal negative situation in his poems employing the English poet's techniques of the objective correlative and of juxtaposition. For example, in "**Spesso il male di vivere**" Montale uses **three examples of objective correlative, il rivo strozzato** (line 2), **la foglia riarsa** (lines 3-4), **il cavallo stramazzone** (line 4) in order to express the sterility and the evil existing in contemporary society. These images are juxtaposed to **la statua** (line 7), **la nuvola** (line 8), **il falco** (line 8), **symbols** of human indifference which is considered the only solution for modern man.

### **SPESSO IL MALE DI VIVERE**

Spesso il male di vivere ho incontrato  
era il rivo strozzato che gorgoglia  
era l'incartocciarsi della foglia  
riarsa, era il cavallo stramazzone.  
Bene non seppi, fuori del prodigio  
che schiude la divina Indifferenza:  
era la statua nella sonnolenza  
del meriggio, e la nuvola, e il falco alto levato.

**Fiona Shaw performing part 1 of The Wasteland:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPB\\_17rbNXk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPB_17rbNXk)

### **III The Fire Sermon (lines 207 – 256) (p. 666-667)**

Città irreale  
sotto la nebbia scura di un mezzogiorno d'inverno  
Mr. Eugenides, il mercante di Smirne,  
malrasato, con una tasca piena di uva passa  
C.i.f. London: documenti a vista  
mi invitò in un francese demotico (popolare)  
a pranzo al Cannon Street Hotel  
seguita da un fine settimana al Metropole.

Nell'ora violetta, quando gli occhi e la schiena  
si levano dallo scrittoio, quando il motore umano attende  
come un tassì pulsante nell'attesa  
Io Tiresia, benché cieco, pulsante tra due vite  
vecchio con vizzo mammelle di donna, posso vedere  
nell'ora violetta, quell'ora della sera che faticosamente dirige  
verso casa, e riconduce dal mare a casa il marinaio,  
la dattilografa in casa all'ora del tè, sparcchia la colazione, accende il fornello, tira fuori barattoli di cibo conservato.  
Fuori dalla finestra pericolosamente stese  
le sue combinazioni che si asciugano toccate dagli ultimi raggi del sole,  
Sopra il divano (che di notte è suo letto) sono ammucchiate  
Calze, pantofole, camiciole e corsetti.

Io Tiresia, vecchio con vizzate mammelle  
 ho osservato la scena e ho predetto il resto.  
 Anch'io attesi l'ospite aspettato.  
 Lui, il giovinotto foruncoloso, arriva,  
 impiegato in una piccola agenzia immobiliare, dallo sguardo ardito,  
 uno di basso rango a cui la sicurezza si addice  
 come il cilindro (il cappello di seta) a un villano arricchito.  
 L'istante ora è propizio, come bene indovina,  
 il pasto è finito, lei è annoiata e stanca,  
 lui tenta di coinvolgerla con delle carezze  
 che tuttavia non sono respinte (rimproverate) seppure non desiderate.  
 Eccitato e deciso, ecco subito la assale;  
 le mani che la esplorano non incontrano resistenza;  
 la sua vanità non esige intesa,  
 e interpreta l'indifferenza come buona accoglienza.  
 (E io Tiresia ho presofferto tutto  
 ciò che si compie su questo stesso divano o letto;  
 io che a Tebe sedetti sotto le mura  
 e camminai tra i morti che stanno più in basso.)  
 Concede un bacio finale protettivo,  
 e brancola verso l'uscita, trovando al buio le scale...  
 Lei si volge e guarda un attimo nello specchio  
 a stento ricordandosi dell'amante appena uscito;  
 il suo cervello lascia che un pensiero formato  
 solo a metà trascorra: "Bene anche questa è fatta: lieta che sia finita".  
 Quando una donna amabile si piega a far follie  
 e va da sola su e giù per la stanza  
 con gesto meccanico i capelli ravvia  
 e mette sul grammofofono un'aria di danza.

### Fiona Shaw performing part 3 (excerpt: from mm 3.00 to 7.00):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7BIUmByGFs&list=PLzNW\\_NonjGnjb5G57bmibbQ7iJh-aqNYQ&index=6](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7BIUmByGFs&list=PLzNW_NonjGnjb5G57bmibbQ7iJh-aqNYQ&index=6)

**Setting:** The **place** is London (line 5) and Cannon Street Hotel / Metropole / Mr Eugenides || the **time** of the day is a winter noon (line 2);  
 Again the **REALISTIC PRECISION** opposed to the definition "**UNREAL**". This City appears "**unreal**", since it is **wrapped up in brown fog** and only **devoted to commercial transactions** (Cost - Insurance and Freight / document at sight)

The first part of the extract, as far as line 8, is different from the rest of the section. The two parts share the **squalid, decadent, sterile setting** mirroring a **mercantile society**.

Mr. Eugenides the Smyrna (now Izmir, a seaport in western Turkey) merchant is a decadent version of the Phoenician traders who transmitted knowledge about the fertility rites of the old days.

This decadence is reinforced by the image of the **currants**: small **dried grapes**: this is what remains of the ancient rites of Bacchus.

The name of the merchant is given, **Mr Eugenides**, which means "**well-born**", of noble origin, but he is now **unkempt and accustomed to speaking vulgar French** (line 6). His name hints also to a paradoxical result of eugenics, that is the study of methods to improve the mental and physical characteristics of the human race by choosing who may become parents.

Mr Eugenides's invitation implies bisexuality that is an anticipation of Tiresias.

"**Tiresias**, although a mere spectator and not indeed a 'character', is yet the **most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest**. [...] all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. **What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem**."

(from Eliot's original notes)

[According to legend, Tiresias had struck with his stick two snakes that were copulating and so he was transformed into a woman. After seven years he again saw two snakes that were copulating. Thinking that the stick had the magic to change his sex, he struck them again and in this way in fact he was given his original sex. The legend also goes that Jupiter asked Juno if it was true that women receive more pleasure in love than men. Juno denied and so Jupiter decided to ask Tiresias since he had known both sexes. He admitted Jupiter was right. Juno disagreed and the punishment for his answer was everlasting blindness. But Jupiter recompensed him with the power to know the future]

When the sequence shifts to Tiresias ("I Tiresias" (lines 12, 22, 37) we have the **only explicit identification of the speaker** in the poem. He is the **supreme metamorphosis** that brings together the two sexes (line 13 "Old man with wrinkled female breasts") and thus is qualified to **summarise the human experience**.

The theme of blindness is at the basis of the *violet hour* when *I can see*: there is the necessity to **go beyond the boundaries** imposed by oneself, society, conventions, to **grasp the core of reality**. Again, when he wrote *The Waste Land* Eliot was ill: only in this state of confusion he could see the truth. When things lose their material boundaries we can arrive to their **ESSENCE** (Phenomenology).

This reference to Tiresias leads us further: his "**throbbing between two lives**" hints also to his prophesying in Hades (Homer, *Odyssey*): "though blind" he can **see the nature of the dead**, he is now **walking "among the lowest or the dead"** (line 40).

**Present, past and future** co-exist in him; in fact he, coming from the past, has already experienced the events he is now witnessing in the present, and is also able to foretell the future (line 23), **yet he cannot do anything to guide or alter it**.

In spite of the **references to the classical world**, **Eliot prefers everyday language** to the rich language which was once typical of poetry

What Tiresias sees is a **sexual act** between a man, "the young man carbuncular" (line 25), and a woman, "the typist" (line 16). To

underline the **sterility and the routine quality of such sexual intercourse** Eliot **removes all romantic notes** both from the setting and the characters.

The **typist**, a "**liberated**" woman of the early 1920s, is independent and free but this **has not brought her any happiness**: she **lives alone** in an **untidy** bed sitter; full of **uninteresting everyday objects** (lines 17 – 21: food in tins, combinations, stockings, slippers, camisoles, stays), and leads a highly **monotonous life**: all this is underlined by the use of **simple present verbs**, like "clears", "lights", "lays", "are piled" (lines 16-20)

We have again the theme of shrinkage [cf. the Sybil]: 1) Out of the window perilously spread / Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays 2) Food in tins

She is **tired, bored and apathetic, both morally and emotionally**, and she seems to be a "**human engine**" living in a **world of emptiness**. Their sexual relations is presented as mechanical, violent: there is absence of respect, of affection; it is without apparent pleasure (cf. Jupiter and Juno's playful argument)

**The young man carbuncular**: The **man** is "**flushed and decided**" (line 33), **pleased with himself** (line 35 "his vanity requires no response"), not worried about the woman's indifference (line 36 "and makes a welcome or indifference"); he goes away satisfied, since **he is not able to grasp the depths of the squalor he lives in**.

Finally the modern significance of love-making is registered in the reaction of the typist; **the "gramophone" makes it also mechanical**. Her "**automatic hand**" reinforces the impression of **sterility, dullness, squalor, monotony and indifference** of this relationship which is no more than a parody.

Eliot wants to underline how **impossible communication through love is in the waste land**, since this **feeling has been debased to mere lust**.

Use of language: casual, obvious, forced rhymes: each action is made **PREDICTABLE, which is paradoxical with the presence of Tiresias**

395. Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves  
 396. Waited for rain, while the black clouds  
 397. Gathered far distant, over Himavant.  
 398. The jungle crouched, humped in silence.  
 399. Then spoke the thunder  
 400. DA  
 401. *Datta*: what have we given?  
 402. My friend, blood shaking my heart  
 403. The awful daring of a moment's surrender  
 404. Which an age of prudence can never retract  
 405. By this, and this only, we have existed  
 406. Which is not to be found in our obituaries  
 407. Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider  
 408. Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor  
 409. In our empty rooms  
 410. DA  
 411. *Dayadhvam*: I have heard the key  
 412. Turn in the door once and turn once only  
 413. We think of the key, each in his prison  
 414. Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison  
 415. Only at nightfall, aethereal rumours  
 416. Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus  
 417. DA  
 418. *Damyata*: The boat responded  
 419. Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar  
 420. The sea was calm, your heart would have responded  
 421. Gaily, when invited, beating obedient  
 422. To controlling hands

423. I sat upon the shore  
 424. Fishing, with the arid plain behind me  
 425. Shall I at least set my lands in order ?  
 426. London Bridge is falling down falling down falling  
 down  
 427. *Poi s'aspose nel foco che gli affina*  
 428. *Quando fiam uti chelidon* - O swallow swallow  
 429. *Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie*  
 430. These fragments I have shored against my ruins  
 431. Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.  
 432. Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.  
 433. Shantih shantih shantih

Il Gange era basso, le foglie flosce  
 in attesa di pioggia, mentre nuvole nere  
 si addensavano ben lontano, sull'Himavant.  
 La giungla era appiattita, accovacciata in silenzio.  
 Allora parlò il tuono

DA

*Datta*: che abbiamo dato noi?

Amico mio, sangue che agita il mio cuore  
 l'ardimento terribile di un attimo di abbandono  
 che un secolo di prudenza non potrà mai ritrattare  
 per questo, e questo soltanto noi siamo esistiti  
 che non si troverà nei nostri necrologi  
 o sulle iscrizioni ammantate dal ragno benevolo  
 o sotto i suggelli infranti dal notaio scarno  
 nelle nostre stanze vuote

DA

*Dayadhvam*: ho udito la chiave  
 girare sulla porta una volta, girare soltanto una volta  
 noi pensiamo alla chiave, ognuno nella propria prigione  
 e pensando alla chiave ciascuno conferma una prigione.  
 Solo al calare della notte eterei rumori  
 ravvivano per un attimo un Coriolano affranto

DA

*Damyata*: la barca rispondeva  
 lieta alla mano esperta di vela e di remo  
 calmo era il mare il tuo cuore  
 avrebbe corrisposto lieto all'invito battendo docilmente  
 alle mani che sorvegliano

Sedetti sulla riva  
 a pescare, dietro di me l'arida pianura  
 riuscirò finalmente a fare ordine nelle mie terre?  
 London Bridge sta cadendo sta cadendo sta cadendo  
*Poi s'aspose nel foco che gli affina*  
*quando fiam uti chelidon* - O rondine rondine  
*Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie*  
 con questi frammenti ho puntellato le mie rovine  
*Why then Ile fit you*. Geronimo è impazzito di nuovo.

Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.  
 Shantih shantih shantih

Multiple voices performing part 5 (excerpt: from mm 5.25 to the end): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fNo9JYyDCA>

In the Bible God is often described as speaking to men with the voice of Thunder. Again the thunder commonly intimates the arrival of the rain. In fact, Eliot refers specifically to the message of the THUNDER given in the Upanishad (holy books of Hinduism, philosophical treatises written in Sanskrit that are at the basis of the theology of ancient Hinduism): here the Supreme Lord of Creation, Prajapati, speaks through the Thunder.

**Da** is the Sanskrit root for all the words relating to the act of **GIVING**. Here it is interpreted from 3 different elements or points of view. Prajapati, the Creator, has three groups of offspring – Men, Ashuras, Gods - who seek His wisdom. Prajapati utters the syllable **DA** and asks if they understand. Men think he says **DATTA**, Give; Ashuras think he says **DAYADHVAM**, sympathize; Gods think he says **DAMYATA**, control and he agrees. **DA** unites 3 virtues which depend from each other and are in fact interchangeable (l. 432). Eliot chooses to go back to the very language that lies behind all varied developments of the Indo-European peoples.



In fact the words of the advice are central to all the major religions. Eliot's intention could be to join western and eastern wisdoms together (in the end of Part III we find Buddha and St Augustine) but also to criticize the state of Christian Church in Europe (western man must find fresh inspiration in the East?). Moreover, DA is also the onomatopoeic representation of the voice of thunder. Last but not least, it is a reference to Joyce's "Yes" of the final monologue by Molly Bloom.

The **Ganges**: the **sacred river** which was the **home of the earliest vegetation myths**, is now represented by the words spoken by an Upanishad and waits for spring and rebirth.

1st Command: **Datta** → meaning: **to give**

Our giving is a **moment's SURRENDER** that paradoxically "an age of prudence can never retract". It suggests surrender to passion, not to love. [our SECRET cannot be found] in *memories draped by the beneficent spider* is a quotation from "The White Devil" by John Webster (1580 - 1625) (cf. the Dog excerpt 1). The characters of the play are passionate and deceitful: "...never trust [your howling wives], they'll remarry / ere (*before*) the spider make a thin curtain for your epitaphs"

2nd Command: **Dayadhvam** → meaning: **to sympathize**

The prison of the self prevents each person from love. Story of **Count Ugolino** (*Hell*, XXXIII): "ed io sentii chiavar l'uscio di sotto / all'orribile torre" (because of his political treachery Ugolino was locked up together with his two sons and two nephews in the tower where they all died of hunger. In Hell he is dedicated to utter hatred against the man who had locked him in the prison (archibishop Ruggieri)

The figure of **Coriolanus** stands for selfishness. "Aethereal rumours" refer to Coriolanus's mother appeal that finally broke his self-confidence. (cf. Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* Book II)

3rd Command: **Damyata** → meaning: **to control**

Each inhabitant of the waste land has to accept authority and act with control. Without self-control one cannot give the other. A good sailor does not impose rigid control on his boat: he accepts the power of the wind and water and bases his steering of the boat on his understanding of this power so that the boat can "respond gaily" as if glad to cooperate with MAN and WIND and SEA.

Eliot's main technique consists of juxtapositions of extreme contemporaneity with mysticism and religious symbolism derived from the past ("The Golden Bough" and "From Ritual to Romance"). This choice illustrates also Eliot's conception of the PAST as an ACTIVE PART of the PRESENT (the American Eliot spent much of his first 10 years in Europe attempting to define the tradition of which he felt a part); in this PRESENT, TIME STANDS STILL; here PAST/PRESENT/FUTURE are mingled in a CONTINUUM of NOW, here there is only DURATION created to achieve gradually a sense of TIMELESSNESS that is the ESSENCE of the poem (despite the literal level: 12 hour period). "Past", in fact, means the present memory of a past experience, while "future" means the present expectation or anticipation of a future thing. TIMELESSNESS is in fact the only possible dimension to conceive the concept of SHANTIH, "PEACE THAT PASSETH ALL UNDERSTANDING", meaning probably a PEACE BEYOND TIME AND SPACE.

*I sat upon the shore // Fishing, with the arid plain behind me* - The allegorical journey from a sterile, decaying, present world towards purification, that is, water and fertility has failed because it has led to an "empty" Holy Chapel, while the landscape around it is connoted with images of death and decadence. Now the protagonist is sitting upon the shore, with the arid plain rather than the unreal city behind him. The final guise of the protagonist is that of the Fisher King.

*London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down* - This popular English song may be associated with an image of modern disintegration, of sinking into a river.

*Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina* - Eliot's note: quotation from Dante, *Purgatory* (XXVI): "Then he hid himself in the fire which refines them". The Provençal poet Daniel Arnaut (*Il miglior fabbro*), condemned to burn for his lust during life, asks for Dante's sympathy: "remember later on my pain". This quotation from *Purgatory* represents the beginning of purification.

*Quando fiam uti chelidon* ("When shall I be like the swallow?"): from an anonymous late Latin poem which celebrates the arrival of Spring and Venus: in the conclusion of the poem there is a reference to raped Philomel transformed into a swallow that here represents also spring.

*Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie* (trad.: The Prince of Aquitaine in the ruined tower): quotation from "The Disinherited" by Gerard de Nerval (1808 - 1855). The author suffered from fits of madness. The tower struck by lightning is present in the Tarot pack of the clairvoyant of "The Burial of the Dead". The dark tower occurs also in some of the Grail stories. Finally this line is a figurative image of his own "ruins" of the following line.

*These fragments I have shored against my ruins*: "these fragments" summarise the whole poem, i.e. a mixture of desire and memory.

*Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe*: from "*Hieronymo's mad again*", subtitle of "The Spanish Tragedy" by Thomas Kid (1557 - 1595). Plot: Hieronymo's son has been murdered. He knows who the murderers are. It happens that the murderers ask him to entertain their fathers with a show. "Why then I'll fit you", Hieronymo says. He devises a play that allows him to take revenge against his son's death: during the play Hieronymo kills the murderers in front of their father (cf. Shakespeare's *Hamlet*). In this line the protagonist turns to the reader. Eliot has devised this poem that allows him to FORCE the PROBLEMS of the WASTE LAND before US **because we are citizens of the UNREAL CITY** and WE MUST FIND OUR GRAIL. SHANTIH sounds like a final BENEDICTION.

Useful link: Video-lecture on T.S.Eliot's "The Waste Land" in general and "The Burial of the Dead" (Part 1) in particular.

<http://www.oilproject.org/lezione/thomas-stearns-eliot-the-waste-land-riassunto-correlativo-oggettivo-7055.html>

<http://www.oilproject.org/lezione/the-waste-land-thomas-stearns-eliot-la-sepolcra-dei-morti-7056.html>