

M.A. CC VI and VII

Professor C Guha

The Waste Land by T S Eliot (1922)

I had discussed extensively in my earlier classes T S Eliot's contribution to the Modernist poetic discourse, the characteristics of *WL*, Ezra Pound's role in the composition of the poem, Eliot's nervous breakdown, his 'awful nightmare of anxiety' and his 'mental *aboulie*', the epigraph, the five-part structure of the poem (reminiscent of Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal*), its unconventional collage-like style, the 'scaffold' of the Fisher King and the Grail Legend, the central concerns of the poem, the influences of Dante and Jules Laforgue.

Relevant quotes:

'Because the material [of the psychoanalytic novel] is so clearly defined... there is no possibility [in it] of *tapping the atmosphere of unknown terror and mystery* in which our life is passed and which psychoanalysis has not yet analysed.'

T S Eliot, "London Letter", *The Dial*, September 1922.

'In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. They will not be imitators, any more than the scientist who uses the discoveries of an Einstein in pursuing his own, independent, further investigations. It is simply a way of *controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy*, which is contemporary history.'

T S Eliot, on the Mythical Method in a 1923 review of *Ulysses*.

Books which can be useful:

1. Valerie Eliot Ed.: *The Waste Land: Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Draft*, 1971.

2. *T S Eliot: The Waste Land*, Ed. C B Cox and Arnold Hinchliffe, Macmillan
[Letters concerning *The Waste Land*, Daniel Woodward: “Notes on the Publishing History and Text of *The Waste Land*”, Conrad Aiken: “An Anatomy of Melancholy”, Cleanth Brooks: “The Critique of the Myth”, David Craig: “The Defeatism of *The Waste Land*”, Hugh Kenner: “The Invisible Poet”.]
3. Herbert Howarth: *Notes on Some Figures Behind T S Eliot*, Chatto & Windus, 1965.
4. Ronald Bush: *T S Eliot: A Study in Character and Style*, Oxford University Press, 1985.
5. Leonard Unger: *T S Eliot: A Selected critique*, Rinehart and Winston, 1948.
6. Elisabeth Drew: *T S Eliot: The Design of his Poetry*, Charles Scribner, 1949.
7. *A Collection of Critical Essays on The Waste Land* (Twentieth century Interpretations), Prentice-Hall, 1968.
8. Stephen Spender: *T S Eliot*, Fontana, 1975.
9. Lyndall Gordon: *T S Eliot: An Imperfect Life*, Vintage, 1998.
10. David Moody, *Cambridge Companion to T S Eliot*, Cambridge UP, 1994.