|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***The Waste Land* by Thomas Stern Eliot (1922)**“Nam SibyllamquidemCumis ego ipse oculismeisvidi in ampullapendere, et cum illipueridicerent: Sibylla titheleis"; respondebatilla: apothaneinthelo.”For Ezra Pound*ilmigliorfabbro*APRIL is the cruellest month, breeding |   |
| Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing |   |
| Memory and desire, stirring |   |
| Dull roots with spring rain. |   |
| Winter kept us warm, covering | *5* |
| Earth in forgetful snow, feeding |   |
| A little life with dried tubers. |   |
| Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee |   |
| With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade, |   |
| And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten, | *10* |
| And drank coffee, and talked for an hour. |   |
| *Bin garkeineRussin, stamm’ ausLitauen, echtdeutsch.* |   |
| And when we were children, staying at the archduke’s, |   |
| My cousin’s, he took me out on a sled, |   |
| And I was frightened. He said, Marie, | *15* |
| Marie, hold on tight. And down we went. |   |
| In the mountains, there you feel free. |   |
| I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter. |   |
|   |  |
| What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow |   |
| Out of this stony rubbish?Son of man, | *20* |
| You cannot say, or guess, for you know only |   |
| A heap of broken images, where the sun beats, |   |
| And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief, |   |
| And the dry stone no sound of water. Only |   |
| There is shadow under this red rock, | *25* |
| (Come in under the shadow of this red rock), |   |
| And I will show you something different from either |   |
| Your shadow at morning striding behind you |   |
| Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you; |   |
| I will show you fear in a handful of dust. |  *30* |
|         *Frisch weht der Wind* |   |
|         *Der Heimatzu,* |   |
|         *Mein IrischKind,* |   |
|         *Woweilestdu?* |   |
| “You gave me hyacinths first a year ago; | *35* |
| They called me the hyacinth girl.” |   |
| —Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden, |   |
| Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not |   |
| Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither |   |
| Living nor dead, and I knew nothing, | *40* |
| Looking into the heart of light, the silence. |   |
| *Öd’ und leer das Meer.* |   |
|   |  |
| Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyante, |   |
| Had a bad cold, nevertheless |   |
| Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe, | *45* |
| With a wicked pack of cards. Here, saidshe, |   |
| Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor, |   |
| (Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!) |   |
| Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks, |   |
| The lady of situations. | *50* |
| Here is the man with three staves, and here the Wheel, |   |
| And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card, |   |
| Which is blank, is something he carries on his back, |   |
| Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find |   |
| The Hanged Man. Fear death by water. | *55* |
| I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring. |   |
| Thank you. If you see dear Mrs. Equitone, |   |
| Tell her I bring the horoscope myself: |   |
| One must be so careful these days. |   |
|   |  |
| Unreal City, | *60* |
| Under the brown fog of a winter dawn, |   |
| A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many, |   |
| I had not thought death had undone so many. |   |
| Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled, |   |
| And each man fixed his eyes before his feet. | *65* |
| Flowed up the hill and down King William Street, |   |
| To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours |   |
| With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine. |   |
| There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying “Stetson! |   |
| You who were with me in the ships at Mylae! | *70* |
| That corpse you planted last year in your garden, |   |
| Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year? |   |
| Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed? |   |
| Oh keep the Dog far hence, that’s friend to men, |   |
| Or with his nails he’ll dig it up again! | *75* |
| You!*hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!”* |  |

***The Waste Land* : Historical Context**

1. **Read the first section of *The Waste Land*. What’s your first impression? Compare to Pound’s *In a Station of the Metro*.**
2. **Read the following notes about Eliot’s esthetic views and clarify how they apply to his poem.**
3. **What do you think, in the light of your readings about Eliot’s biography, makes Eliot’s poem “difficult?” for most readers?**
4. **T. S. Eliot and Literature.**

\*\* According to Eliot’s Modernist esthetics (theory about what is beautiful in art) “The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an ‘objective correlative’; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.”***COMPARE*** with Wordsworth’s famous dictum that ‘Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity’.

\*\*Eliot makes this observation in his essay on Hamlet published in 1919, three years before *TWL*. “*Qua* work of art, the work of art cannot be interpreted; there is nothing to interpret; we can only criticize it according to standards in comparison to other works of art.”

\*\* In *The Metaphysical Poets*, published in 1921, a year before *TWL*, Eliot writes: “We can only say that it appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be difficult. Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning.”

\*\*Eliot writes: “Various critics have done me the honour to interpret the poem in terms of criticism of the contemporary world, have considered it, indeed, an important piece of social criticism. To me it was only the relief of a wholly insignificant grouse against life: it is just a piece of rhythmical grumbling.”

\*\*Woolf wrote in her diary in June 1922, four months before *TWL* was published: “Eliot dined last Sunday and read his poem…*The Waste Land*, it is called…Tom’s autobiography – a melancholy one.”

\*\* In the prepublication version of *The Waste Land* the poem’s epigraph

was taken from Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1900), as the narrator recounts the death of Kurtz: “Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision—he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than breath—‘The horror! the horror!’”