



Organic Unity in T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land

Leila Bellour

Department of Foreign Languages

Abdelhafid Boussouf University Center of Mila

Abstract –

This paper evinces the organic form in T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land. Though the poem is always considered as fragmented, it constitutes a unified whole. The poem consummates a marriage between form and content. Eliot's poetic form resonates with modern existence that is fragmented. His personal experience also has a direct bearing on his style and mode of composition. The form is in tune with the reality of the poet's psychological crisis and the outside shattered reality.

Keywords –

Fragmentation, The Waste Land, T. S. Eliot, Organic form, Psychological crisis, Unity.

ملخص -

يوضح هذا المقال الوحدة العضوية في قصيدة أرض اليباب لـ ت. س. اليوت. بالرغم من أن القصيدة دائما تعتبر مفككة فإنها تشكل كلا موحدًا. إن القصيدة تزوج بين الشكل و المضمون، فالقالب الشعري يتناغم مع الحياة الحديثة التي يميزها الشتات. كما أن التجربة الشخصية لـ اليوت لها أيضا تأثير مباشر على أسلوبه و نمط كتابته، فالقصيدة توحى بالمعاناة النفسية للأديب و صراعها مع الواقع الخارجي.

الكلمات المفتاحية -

الوحدة العضوية، تجزئة، وحدة، الأزمة النفسية، ت. س. اليوت، الأرض اليباب

A throng of critics attack Eliot for writing a fragmented poem, which they describe as his major artistic failure. This form makes it impossible to figure out the poem's meaning. The form of the poem is referred to in the last section of the poem as follows: "These fragments I have shored against my ruins"¹Eliot's inability to

formulate coherent sentences is also implied in the following lines: “I can connect/ Nothing with nothing” (3:301-02).

Despite the fragmented form of the poem, organic form is one of Eliot’s main artistic concerns. Eliot’s stance on the point can be summed up as follows:

The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. 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, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values, of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new.²

So, according to Eliot, the good poet is he who can bring together all the dissociated and fragmentary elements swarming within the ego and make them in a harmonious order. In one of his essays, Eliot defines the poet’s mind as a “receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together.”³ Thus, Eliot still adheres to the Romantic concept of wholeness. The critic T.E. Hulme spells out a very approximate idea about organic form as follows:

Say the poet is moved by a certain landscape, he selects from that certain images which, put into juxtaposition in separate lines, serve to suggest and to evoke the state he feels. To this piling- up and juxtaposition of distinct images in different lines, one can find a fanciful analogy in music. A great revolution in music when, for the melody that is one-dimensional music, was substituted harmony which moves in two. Two visual images form what one may call a visual chord. They unite to suggest an image which is different to both.⁴

Many critics attempt to answer and dispel the accusations made against “The Waste Land”’s fragmentation. They view the chaotic form as concomitant with the poem’s psychological meaning. The critic J.Hillis Miller, for example, states that Eliot’s early poems are “filled with broken things packed side by side, close but not touching, each is detached from the context which would normally complete it. One assumption justifying this incoherence is a psychological one.”⁵

That is, in Eliot's early poetry, what is said and the way in which it is said are inseparable.

In their answer to the momentous query of the poem's organic form, the critics Jewel Spears Brooker and Joseph Bentley argue that the form of the "The Waste Land" mimics the break down of social relations. In their words, the best terms to describe

the poem's method is parataxis [It] is the absence of transitions. A simple inventory of persons and perspectives is paratactic. In ordinary texts, relative importance is stated through the use of subordinating connectors, but these along with other transitions have been omitted. It seems plain that they have been omitted because they do not exist in the world."⁶

Hence, the poem's form is viewed as representative of its poet's sinking into chaos. It depicts life when the center of the individual is lost and things fall apart. Parataxis and the loss of linguistic sequence echo an absence or a loss in real life; it is the absence of community and communion. Brooker and Bentley express the same point more explicitly as follows:

The deliberate rejection of sequence, signals, connectors, and transitions within language is an advanced strategy for draining intimacy out of the system of discourse. It removes those aspects of language that deal most directly with linkage, merger, and continuity within the code system itself. Parataxis, then, is peculiarly appropriate for a poem taking the loss of community as its central subject, a poem evoking wasted lands, failed loves, and bereft mothers as its central symbols (Brooker and Bentley 213).

The absence of connection in the poem reflects the individual's emptiness, fragmentation and lack of any sense of self-cohesion. Commenting on the significance of form in illuminating the work's meaning, the critic Margaret C. Weirick voices the same idea as follows: "Its fragmentation, juxtaposition, and sudden shifts of time, space, and characterization reflect the difficulties people have in relation to each other [...] the fragmented way in which Eliot presents his poems reflects the fragmentation in the lives of the people in The Waste Land."⁷ So, through his art, Eliot projects the interior disorder outward. That is, the poet's emotional experience seems to be in tune with his aesthetic configuration. Indeed, the poem's structure resembles to some extent that of the Cubists in which meaning is not derived from the sequential positioning of information, but rather from

the relationship between fragments. The sections of the poem are knit together by an invulnerable strand; “Mr. Eliot’s poem is also a collection of flashes, but there is no effect of heterogeneity, since all these flashes are relevant to the same thing and together give what seems to be a complete expression of this poet’s vision of modern life.”⁸ Reading “The Waste Land” evinces the verity of such view. Though they seem disconnected, the sections of the poem follow more closely Eliot’s mental movement and his psychological development. The first section, entitled “The Burial of the Dead”, presents the general characteristics of the modern waste land: the spiritual and psychological plights. The second section deals chiefly with human relationships, particularly between married couples. The third section, “The Fire sermon”, is concerned with the main cause of the wastelanders’ problems, which is lust and sexual promiscuity. The fourth part “Death by Water” sums up the lesson about the futility of existence without spiritual guidance. In the last section, the protagonist’s problem is resolved spiritually by means of religion, which is found to be the only way out of the psychological waste land.

Given autobiographical information about the poet, one might say that the poem has an effective cohesive structure. Eliot’s life can be seen as the fulcrum around which the poem is organized and structured. This view is echoed by Gorham B. Munson, who states that: “in structure the poem is loose: it is full of interstices. Episode does not inevitably follow episode: transitions do not carry us, willy-nilly, from theme to theme, from movement to movement. Its unity depends upon Mr. Eliot’s personality, not upon the poem’s functions and their adjustments and relations.”⁹ Eliot’s biographer Ronald Bush spells out a very approximate idea as follows: “Once we have given ourselves over to the emotional pressure of the poem we accept its coherence as we would accept the sequence of events in a dream, where objects quite often have an order, an emotional charge and a significance very different from the ones they have in waking consciousness.”¹⁰ So, by collecting the fragments of the poem, the reader can reach the poet’s vision and penetrate his mind. The fragments of his poem look very much like the events in a dream that though apparently seem dissociated; they are woven in an emotional logic. The critic Harold Monroe, in turn, asserts that The Waste Land is

a dream presented without any poetic boast, bluff or padding; and it lingers in the mind more like a dream than a poem, which is one of the reasons why it is both obscure and amusing. It is not possible to see it whole except in the manner that one may watch a cloud which, though remaining the same cloud, changes its form repeatedly as one looks.¹¹

The chaotic form of the poem resembles the incoherent shift of events in a dream. So, whatever the poem's form of formlessness, its allusions and quotations constitute an artistic whole.

In the same vein, J.C. Square suggests that: "a man who can write as well as Mr. Eliot writes in this poem should be so bored (not passionately disgusted) with existence that he doesn't mind what comes next, or who understands it."¹² "The Waste Land" reaches out beyond itself to the thoughts and feelings of its poet. This partly accounts for its obscurity and fragmentation. So, the deeper the artist has withdrawn inside himself, the more difficult is his poetry to understand. However, amalgamating the different bits and fragments of the speaker's mind, one might reconstruct the whole identity of the author. Information about the poet can be picked up even from the gaps of the poem. Squire's conviction that the poem's fragmented form emanates from Eliot's state of mind is evidenced by considering Eliot's mental break down during writing "The Waste Land". Indeed, the poem's fragmentation, disjointed narration, confusion and dismay resemble the narrative of the shell-shock. According to Young,

The patient's narratives are never more than part-accounts, for he divides each event or experience into two stories, told from incommensurable points of view. His consuming anger and pathological tenderness provide his wartime narratives with such a quality of immediacy and timelessness that we feel he is actively re-experiencing the events rather than simply describing them.¹³

"The Waste Land" is also narrated in the form of stories and experiences that seem disconnected, but they are fragments of the same story: the experience of the typist and the clerk, Philomel, Lil and Albert, etc. All these stories are about violation, sexual desire, and broken relationships. The stories are also part-accounts except the story of the typist and the clerk. Temporarily speaking, "The Waste Land" also takes place in anachronistic time. Like the traumatized person's perception of time, that is fragmented and incoherent, time in

“The Waste Land” does not respect chronology; it moves forward and jumps back to the past.

In his essay on John Ford, Eliot argues that the body of Shakespeare’s work is unified by his personality. As he puts it: “the whole of Shakespeare’s work is one poem” and everything he wrote is “unified by one significant, consistent, and developing personality.”¹⁴ For Eliot, the author’s personality is considered as a structural device, which makes the literary work a coherent whole. “The Waste Land” might be a case in point.

Indeed, many critics view the form and content of the poem as intricately interwoven. Reading “The Waste Land”, one ventures to say that it is made of randomly arranged narrative bits, which at first sight seem to have nothing to do with each other. According to Stephen Coote, “The way in which “The Waste Land” is constructed is at one with Eliot’s themes in the work. Form and content, subject and treatment, correspond.”¹⁵ The disruptive and fragmented form reflects the self’s internal division, disordering, and doubling. As Robert Schumann points out, “Only when the form is quite clear to you will the spirit become clear to you.”¹⁶ In the same vein, Malcolm Bradbury underlines the correspondence between form and content as follows: “The fragments may have been part of an inward fragmentation of spirit; they also expressed the fractures of the modern city, and they explored further the methods of super-positioning that had developed from imagism.”¹⁷

The modernist tradition needed to convey a new content, which required this new form. Thus, Eliot’s experimentation with this disruptive form implicitly criticizes society with its fragmentation, estrangement and dehumanization. In “The Metaphysical Poets” , Eliot writes: “ poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be difficult [...] The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning.”¹⁸ So, the form of “The Waste Land” is tightly linked with its content.

Trying to impose a unity onto the poem, a bulk of critics promotes the view that “The Waste Land” is the poet’s stream of consciousness. The critic Edmund Wilson, for instance, maintains that the

characteristic literary form today, almost everywhere where the old formulas are being discarded, is a cross-section of the human consciousness of a single specific human being, usually carried

through a very limited period-only a day or an hour-of his carrier. It is the whole world sunk in the subjective life of a single human soul-beyond whose vague and impassable walls there is nothing solid or clear, there is nothing which exists in itself as part of an objective order.¹⁹

The stream of consciousness, which is a technical innovation in Modernism, is the most appropriate means for projecting the author's inner thoughts and feelings. Eliot's interest in this poetic form dates back at least to "The Love Song of Alfred Prufrock". The dramatic monologue is particularly interesting for Eliot because it enables him to express his vision of reality in a very subjective way. In this regard, Elinor Wylie writes: "he has discarded all disguises; nothing could be more personal and direct than his method of presenting his weariness and despair by means of a stream of consciousness and images the like of which, a little dulled and narrowed, runs through the brain of any educated and imaginative man whose thoughts are sharpened by suffering."²⁰ The use of the stream of consciousness, which results in a distorted form assures a better presentation of reality and enables the reader to penetrate into the poet's mind.

Characterization in "The Waste Land" poses a problem for most readers as they find it impossible to create a coherent account from the fragments narrated by different characters. However, advocates of the poem's organic form use characterization as evidence for the poem's unity. The Critic Robert Langbaum contends that the poem is a very personal work of art, where the poet disguises his own experience by using multiple points of view. He writes: "Since the protagonist plays at one and the same time both active and passive roles, we must understand all the characters as aspects or projections of his consciousness-that the poem is essentially a monodrama."²⁵

Multiplicity of perspectives is an artistic detachment used by the poet to distance and hide his feelings. This view is echoed by Martin Scofield, who maintains that "Eliot wrote a poetry of masks and personae, but the masks are [...] masks for himself, versions or projections of aspects of his own personality."²² Though emotions are detached from the "I", they are re-embodied in other selves or characters. This view collides head-on with Eliot's assertion that the poet's passions and emotions can penetrate in a work of art through characters. In his words: "The creation of a work of art, we will say the creation of a character in a drama, consists in the process of

transfusion of the personality, or, in a deeper sense, the life, of the author into the character. ²³ So, all the voices of the poem are fragmentary bits of the poet's self. In "The Fire Sermon", the speaker, who was weeping at Margate, voices Eliot who was suffering from a psychological and spiritual shock. Likewise, the lover of the hyacinth girl, in "The burial of the Dead", is the alter ego of Eliot, who suffered from emotional paralysis. In this regard, the critic James Olney suggests that: "What I take to be the two emotional cathexes of The Waste Land, both of which are undoubtedly personal in origin-the hyacinth girl passage and the line 'By the waters of Lemman I sat down and wept'."²⁴ Similarly, Eliot also casts his own neuroses and sense of alienation on the fisher king.

Indeed, this absence of monologism suggests the absence of a unified subject. Eliot represents his trauma by confusing the boundaries between self and other. As a matter of fact, the traumatic poet loses his individuality and becomes incapable to conceive of himself as distinct from the other characters or literary figures. The poet sometimes narrates an event that resembles his personal experiences; but he unconsciously identifies himself completely with the sufferers or victims. Characters in "The Waste Land" are subconsciously selected from his experience and his desire. In this regard, Nancy K. Gish posits that in Eliot's early poems, desire

is discarnate: both disembodied and removed from the voice that speaks it, yet intensely realized in altered selves or states of consciousness from whom the speaker withdraws and in whom intensities of sensation and emotion exist apart from the ostensible "I" who speaks. Along with the many objectified personae of marionettes, clowns, and actors, in whom desire is contained and mocked, Eliot depicts states of depersonalization and deboulement as representations of desire that it would mean madness to retain and also a kind of madness to detach, for dissociation was understood as hysteria, disorder, maladie, and yet a definitively 'modernist' form of consciousness.²⁵

In this view, Eliot's use of so many voices in the poem is intended to obscure his personal experience by identifying himself with other characters and literary figures. The presence of multifarious voices in the poem indicates that the speaker is reduced to a sequence of unrelated experimental fragments. Hence, all the voices in the poem are personifications of the poet's inner struggle. Gish's quote also

elucidates that manyness can be psychologically interpreted as a kind of madness. She also conceives of “deboulement” as equivalent to Eliot’s:”dissociation of sensibility”.

Critics’ view of the poem’s organic unity is substantiated by F.H. Bradley’s principle of self-transcendence of things and the necessary and internal relations among them. In this sense, wholeness is reached through moving outward in an ever more inclusive circle through many layers of immediate objects, like voices, images, allusions and myths. A good illustration of Bradley’s doctrine can be found in the mythic figure Tiresias. In the poem, Tiresias, who is the central consciousness, encompasses the experience of all characters: the Fisher King, the Phoenician sailor, Madame Sosostris, Belladonna, the Hanged Man...etc. According to Eliot:

Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a ‘character’, is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem.²⁶

Since Tiresias encompasses the multifarious perspectives that the poem comprises, he achieves Bradley’s idea of the Absolute. According to the latter, Knowledge, which proceeds from one thinking subject or view point, is limited. That is, the movement towards truth requires the migration from one point of view to another, occupation of as many perspectives as possible. In a chapter on solipsism in his doctoral thesis, Eliot voices the same idea as follows:

The point of view (or finite centre) has for its object one consistent world, and accordingly no finite centre can be self-sufficient, for the life of a soul does not consist in the contemplation of one consistent world but in the painful task of unifying (to a greater or less extent) jarring and incompatible ones, and passing, when possible, from two or more discordant viewpoints to a higher which shall somehow include and transmute them.²⁷

In “The Waste Land”, this higher perspective is Tiresias; or it might be the poet himself, the unifier of all the noises and voices in the poem. This position is echoed by Brooker and Joseph, who state that: “Tristan, Isolde, the Hyacinth lovers, and all of the pained figures in “The Waste Land” can be seen as manifestations of himself. [I.e.

Eliot].”(Brooker and Bentley74).Worthy of mention is that the form of Eliot’s poem may stem from his adherence to F.H. Bradley’s notion of ‘finite centre’, the idea that nothing can be understood from one’s perspective.

The fact that the poem is a tapestry of different consciousnesses can be explained in terms of the Bergsonian theory, where the self consists of many layers. The sum of these selves is necessary for the individual’s wholeness. Hence, all the characters of the poem can be read as layers of Tiresias’ self. This idea is elaborated at length by the critic Marie Ann Gillies, who states that in accordance with Bergson’s philosophy,

Tiresias assumes the role of the poem’s central self because it is his superficial social self who provides the stability necessary to relate the poem. Since all the characters in the poem ‘meet in Tiresias’, then [...] they are all layers of Tiresias’ self, merging and interpenetrating throughout the poem. The many other voices that vie for prominence provide the subject matter of the poem just as the layers of self which exist below the social self are ultimately responsible for its shape. The tension which Bergson and Eliot see as existing due to the collision of the various aspects of the self provides a dynamic element in the poem, while placing these aspects within a superficial stable self (Tiresias) gives the poem a semblance of stability.²⁸

So, the presence of Tiresias in the poem proffers it coherence and unity. Interestingly, Tiresias’ role that is stated by Eliot in his notes to the poem collides with Bergson’s theory of the self.

The poem’s form expresses Eliot’s desire to create wholes from fragments. Art can be viewed as a unifier that restores order to a chaotic life, and to reconstitute the fragmented elements of his split self. Miller posits that by using such fragmentary form, Eliot attempts to impose an order on reality. According to him:

The finite self is hopelessly peripheral, but if its elements can be brought into order they may vibrate, though as an infinite distance, in harmony with the divine pattern. This bringing into order is Eliot’s fundamental definition of art. Though art and religion are always to be distinguished, art is not an end in itself. It can take man only part of the way toward salvation, but its reason for being is precisely to take him that part of the way. This it does through an ordering of reality which leads to an artistic stillness oriented toward the divine stillness and echoing it (Poets of Reality 143).

This quote suggests the possibility of redemption through art. Creative writing affords Eliot the coherence he so desperately needed. If religion has the capacity to achieve order and equilibrium in the individual's life, art can fulfill the same function. With the breakdown of morality in modern age, Eliot, like other modernists, turned to art as a means to structure his life. Through art, the poet can restore order to a chaotic life; he can escape reality to a world of greater propriety, stability, order, and beauty. Art, like religion, might be a sublimation of sexual drives and lust that lead only to madness and fragmentation. Thus, the poet engages in a poetic purgation to anchor his self. This is very evident in Eliot's line: "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" (5:430).

To overcome his sense of fragmentation, Eliot aligns himself with various literary figures by the use of the allusive method, which results in a fragmented poem. Loathing in his contemporary world, Eliot finds solace in the literature of the past. According to Richard Badenhansen, "such fragments shored against the ruins of Eliot's psyche posit intersexuality as a bulwark against a collapsing ego unable to maintain control."²⁹ So, "These fragments I have shored against my ruins", are the fragments of his poem, the different allusions and voices, which the poet uses to reconstruct a poetic voice. This act is in tune with his attempt to create his true self out of fragments, and to rescue his soul from a real crisis. Thus, life might continue and return through art. The allusive method also makes it possible for Eliot to search through different ages and literatures of the past for truth, for what makes life meaningful and significant.

The poem's chaotic form reflects Eliot's struggle to transform the wounds of his life into art. According to Jewel Spears Brooker:

By the time he was writing *The Waste Land*, the crisis was full-blown, with loss of distinction in his psychological life and his marital life echoing those in the postwar culture around him. The tragic cluster including his wife's illness and their increasing rivalry, Eliot feared, might have blocked his poetic efforts. He felt that he, like Philomel, had been silenced.³⁰

Reading "The Waste Land", one might easily deduce that the poet is wrestling with words to express his illness. Language, for Eliot, fails to capture or describe the pain of the sufferer; it runs dry. Hence, to overcome his inability to speak and convey his feelings, the poet resorts to the allusive method. The latter results in a poem, which is a

virtual repository of horrific epigraphs and allusions. Eliot's use of gaps in "A Game of Chess", and the use of non-human sounds (like sound of cock, sound of thunder...jug, jug,) signals meaninglessness and evinces the poet's writing block. Even language breaks down and fails to express the poet's psychedelic experience. Eliot's breaking with the conventional rules of speech is both an act of madness and a form of escape. It, further, demonstrates his craving to step out of society and even out of reality.

The fragments, which the poet shores against his ruins, suggest art as a curative power for the shell-shock poet. Poetry gives Eliot moments of distraction from his illness. Like the typist, who puts her gramophone after the incident with the clerk, Eliot escapes his trauma to the world of fantasy (art). As Philomel's rape and torture transforms her into something beautiful: a nightingale; Eliot's suffering is transformed into a masterpiece: "The Waste Land". According to Brooker and Bentley, "The poem is about a disinherited prince who turns his desolation into the music of poetry. These fragments have in common the motif of singing which persists through loss and transforms disaster into art" (Brooker and Bentley 204).

The poem brings solace to Eliot, who is damaged emotionally from the ravages of marriage and the First World War. Confession through poetry is the only way Eliot finds to comfort his traumatized mind. In this regard, Brooker and Bentley note that:

the first fragments really do illustrate a shoring -up process. They affirm order and art as potent answers to collapse, pain, depression, and even the dissolution of a tradition of order and art [...] poetry can act as a saving consolation in times of hopelessness (Brooker and Bentley 205).

Eliot wanted a therapy in which he could speak freely about himself and his life. Thus, writing constitutes what is called in Freud's terminology "conversion", that is, "the return of the repressed". Trosman maintains that:

it is possible that the working out of the poem with the reactivation of experience from the past, the mixing of memory and desire, and the unification of isolated and fragmented parts of the self may have been a form of partial self-analysis work. When Eliot wrote towards the end of the poem: "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" (line

430), he described a process of partial integration that brought about a relief from his personal grouse against life.³¹

The word “shore” here is very significant; it indicates that the speaker has approached the solution to his problem. Since the shore is the place where the sea and the land meet, the word implies that the poet is on the way out from the waste land to a more fertilized one.

The movement of the poem corresponds to its poet’s precarious situation and his recovery from his psychological collapse. According to Ronald Bush, “The first three sections of the poem which constitute the poem’s nightmare were composed at Margate. The last two sections were written at Lausanne. The poem’s turning from fire to water is in tune with the poet’s movement from “anxiety and fear” to “relief from an intolerable burden.”(T.S. Eliot 70).

Eliot, in “What the Thunder Said,” has established equilibrium between his ascetic and aesthetic aspects, that is, between his religious and poetic calling. This part of the poem was written at a time when Eliot was experiencing an emotional release. In 1922, Eliot, in a letter to Bertrand Russell, wrote: “it gives me very great pleasure to know that you like *The Waste Land*, and especially Part V which in my opinion is not only the best part, but the only part that justifies the whole, at all.”³² The last section of the poem was written in Lausanne, at a time when Eliot recovered from his nervous breakdown. Interestingly, this part, unlike the other parts, hardly needed Pound’s revision or suggestions³³. Discussing the dialectic relationship between Pascal’s illness and his artistic creation, Eliot states that Pascal

was at the time when he received his illumination from God in extremely poor health; but it is a commonplace that some forms of illness are extremely favourable, not only to religious illumination, but to artistic and literary composition. A peace of writing meditated, apparently without progress, for months or years, may suddenly take shape and word; and in this state long passages may be produced which require little or no retouch.³⁴

In this quote, Eliot’s comment on Pascal’s artistic creation and trauma applies to “*The Waste Land*”, particularly to the last section. For Eliot, illness might be a vehicle not just for religious illumination but to artistic creation. The more the poet is healthy, the more what he writes becomes clear and coherent. Commenting on the last part of the poem, Stephen Spender suggests the following interpretation: “Eliot

seems to have written the last section of the poem, 'What the Thunder Said', with extreme rapidity, almost as if it were automatic writing. It is visionary poetry written out of intense suffering and transforms the poet into seer."³⁵ The artist's suffering and madness might elevate him to the status of a seer. The poet in the modern age is the prophet and the savior of his civilization. In a world drained of spiritual values, he is the only hero, who will give voice to his people's deeper longing for order and salvation.

Conclusion

The paper has evinced that *The Waste Land* is a unified, coherent, and inclusive piece of art. There is an organic unity between the parts of the poem and between the form and the theme. Despite its form of formlessness, the theme and form of the poem contributed powerfully to the sense of an artistic whole. The poem's fragmentation, for instance, originates in the poet's fragmented self. Thus, the fragments of the poem constitute a whole body displaying the poet's experience. The form of the poem does not only emanate from an acute sense of crisis in the poet's life; it also reflects the crisis of modern existence. Eliot believes that the modern world is full of disconnected fragments; hence, the role of the poet is that of picking them up. His task is to dissolve, diffuse, and dissipate in order to create an illusory whole and order.

Endnotes –

- ¹T. S. Eliot, "The Waste Land", The Waste Land and Other Poems, Ed. T.S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1968):.5. All the subsequent quotations are taken from this edition.
- ² ---, "The Function of Criticism", Selected Essays, Ed. T.S. Eliot, 1923 (London: Faber and Faber, 1986):23.
- ³ ----, "Tradition and the individual Talent", The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism, Ed. T.S. Eliot (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1976): 55.
- ⁴ T. E. Hulme, "A Lecture on Modern Poetry," Further Speculations, Ed. Sam Hynes (London: University of Minnesota Press. 1955):73.
- ⁵ J. Hillis Miller, Poets of Reality: Six Twentieth Century (New York: Atheneum, 1969): 145.

- ⁶ Jewel Spears Brooker, and Bentley Joseph, Reading the Waste Land: Modernism and the Limits of Interpretation (University of Massachusetts Press, 1990): 206.
- ⁷ Margaret C. Weirick, T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land": Sources and Meanings (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc, 1971.): 12.
- ⁸ "Review of The Waste Land and inaugural Issue of the Criterion", T.S. Eliot: The Contemporary Reviews, Ed. Jewel Spears Brooker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 77.
- ⁹ Gorham B. Munson, "The Esotericism of T.S. Eliot", T.S. Eliot: The Critical Heritage Vol 1, Ed. Michael Grant (New York: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005): 201.
- ¹⁰ Ronald Bush, T.S. Eliot: A Study in Character and Style (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984): 60.
- ¹¹ Harold Monroe, "Notes for a Study of 'The Waste Land': An Imaginary Dialogue with T.S. Eliot, 'Chapbook'", T.S. Eliot: The Critical Heritage Vol 1, Ed. Michael Grant (New York: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005):157.
- ¹² J. C. Square, "Poetry," T.S. Eliot: The Contemporary Reviews, Ed. Jewel Spears Brooker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004):115.
- ¹³ Allan Young, Inventing post-traumatic Stress Disorder (Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995):201.
- ¹⁴ T. S. Eliot, "John Ford", Selected Essays, Ed. T.S. Eliot, 1932 (London: Faber and Faber, 1986):203.
- ¹⁵ Stephen Coote, The Waste Land (London: Penguin Critical Studies, 1985):55.
- ¹⁶ Robert Schumann, Qtd in Stephen Coote, The Waste Land (London: Penguin Critical Studies, 1985):55.
- ¹⁷ Malcolm Bradbury, The Modern World :Ten Great Writers (London: Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd, 1988):198.
- ¹⁸ T. S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets", Selected Essays, Ed. T.S. Eliot, 1921 (London: Faber and Faber, 1986):289.
- ¹⁹ Edmund Wilson, "The Rag-Rag of the Soul", T.S. Eliot: The Contemporary Reviews, Ed. Jewel Spears Brooker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004):78.
- ²⁰ Elinor Wylie, "Mr. Eliot's Sling Horn", T.S. Eliot: The Contemporary Reviews, Ed. Jewel Spears Brooker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004):96.
- ²¹ Robert Langbaum, "The Walking Dead," T.S. Eliot The Waste Land: Authoritative Text, Context, Criticism, Ed. Michael North (New York: W.W.Norton& Company, Inc, 2001): 234.
- ²² Martin Scofield, T.S. Eliot: The Poems (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988):63.

- ²³ T. S. Eliot, “Ben Jonson,” The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism, Ed. T.S. Eliot (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1976):118.
- ²⁴ James Olney, “Where is the Real T.S. Eliot? Or, The Life of the Poet”, The Cambridge Companion to T.S. Eliot, Ed. A. David Moody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2000): 10.
- ²⁵ Nancy K. Gish, “Discarnate Desire: T.S. Eliot and the Poetics of Dissociation”, Gender, Desire, and Sexuality in T.S. Eliot, Ed. Cassandra Laity, and Nancy K.Gish (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004):116-17.
- ²⁶ T.S. Eliot, “Notes to The Waste Land,” The Waste Land and Other Poems, Ed. T.S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1968): 46-7.
- ²⁷ -----, Qtd in Denis Donoghue, “The Word Within a Word”, T.S.Eliot The Waste Land: Authoritative Text, Context, Criticism, Ed. Michael North (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2001):226.
- ²⁸ Marie Ann Gillies, “Bergsonianism: Time Out of Mind,” A Concise Companion to Modernism, Ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003):106.
- ²⁹ Richard Badenhausen, T.S .Eliot and the Art of Collaboration (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 99.
- ³⁰ Jewel Spears Brooker, “Mimetic Desire and the Return to Origins,” Gender, Desire, and Sexuality in T.S. Eliot, Ed. Cassandra Laity, and Nancy K. Gish (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 139.
- ³¹ Trosman, Qtd in Ronald Bush, T.S. Eliot: A Study in Character and Style (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984): 69.
- ³² T.S. Eliot, Qtd in Ronald Bush, T.S. Eliot: A Study in Character and Style (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984): 73.
- ³³ Indeed, “The Waste Land” was the result of Pound and Eliot’s collaboration. Especially during his mental breakdown, Eliot sent the drafts of his poem to Pound for revision. Eliot acknowledges Pound’s efforts by describing him, in the dedication of the poem, as “the better artificer” According to Macrae, “The main effects of Pound’s suggestions were to tighten the organisation of the poem and to remove some overwritten satirical sketches and personal elements.” (Macrae 14)
- ³⁴ T.S. Eliot, “The Pensées of Pascal,” Selected Essays, Ed. T.S. Eliot, (1931) (London: Faber and Faber, 1986): 405.
- ³⁵ Stephen Spender, Eliot (Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd, 1982): 112.