

T.S. Eliot:

The Waste Land

Notes &c.

Objectives

1. To learn how Eliot's use of Tradition and allusion are 'radical' innovations in Modernism.
2. To understand how Eliot's critical ideas operate in the poem, in particular Tradition and the Individual Talent.
3. To develop the 'close reading' or New Critical skills that are essential for poetry but can be equally important to reading prose.
4. To understand the 'institutional' power of Modernism through T.S. Eliot as an editor.

Reading Assignment

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Commentary

[Eliot](#)'s poem *The Waste Land* is among the most influential poetic works in the English language. It was first published in 1922 in four distinct states, only one of which contains the controversial Notes section. They were variously published in periodicals and book editions. *The Waste Land* was first published in London by Eliot himself in his newly

founded journal [The Criterion](#). Scholars such as Michael Levenson have argued that the founding of *The Criterion* was one of the most important moments in literary Modernism because it marked the institutionalization of the movement and its widespread legitimacy. Since we will consider other small magazines that are important to this rise in Modernism, in particular *Blast*, it is worth quoting Levenson at length on this topic:

If we look for a mark of modernism's coming of age, the founding of the *Criterion* in 1922 may prove a better instance than *The Waste Land*, better even than [[James Joyce's](#)] *Ulysses*, because it exemplifies the institutionalization of the movement, the accession to cultural legitimacy. The journal provided Eliot, as editor, with a capacious forum; it had financial stability and intellectual weight; it constituted a respectable vessel for sometimes suspicious contents. (213)

Levenson also notes that the two institutionalizing forces in Modernism are interlaced: "*The Waste Land* appeared in the first issue of the journal, and its entry into the literary arena was no doubt eased by this context.... To set the *Criterion* next to *Blast* is to underscore the extent of the change in eight years" (213). This is to say, the "proper" and high-brow *Criterion* is markedly different from the radical and avant-garde journal *Blast*.

The Criterion became the most important and respectable literary magazine of the time period, and it ran until the opening of the Second World War. *The Waste Land* was also published in the American magazine *The Dial*, which was extremely influential and published works by almost every major modernist writer or visual artist. After these first two appearances, the poem then appeared in book form, first through the publisher Boni and Liveright in the USA at the very end of 1922 and then in the UK in 1923 through the [Hogarth Press](#). The Hogarth Press was run by [Leonard](#) and [Virginia Woolf](#), both of whom Eliot knew well through the social and artistic circle called [Bloomsbury](#), named for the London neighborhood where they lived. The final version through the Hogarth Press is the only textual witness to contain the extensive Notes section, which refers the reader to [Jessie Weston's](#) dubious book *From Ritual to Romance*. The "A Note on the Text" section of the very helpful W.W. Norton & Co. classroom edition contains detailed background information on how this particular version of *The Waste Land* was assembled and what the different versions imply.

The citations to Weston may confuse modern readers. Weston is a largely discredited anthropological folklorist and occult author of

studies on Arthurian quest narratives, mainly Medieval. *From Ritual to Romance* is her most famous work, and in it “[her] aim has been to prove the essentially archaic character of *all* the elements composing the Grail story rather than to analyze the story as a connected whole” (10). This is to say, Weston aimed to demonstrate that the Medieval Grail Romances (the quests for the Holy Grail written mainly in French) ultimately derived from ancient Pagan fertility rituals and myths, such as the Attis and Adonis cults, the Egyptian faiths surrounding Osiris, and various other fertility cults described by [Sir James G. Frazer](#) in his landmark book *The Golden Bough* (1890), a book that began the modern discipline of Anthropology at Cambridge University. Frazer’s work appears in the closing images of the film “Apocalypse Now,” in [Sigmund Freud](#)’s *Totem and Taboo*, and was used by many modernists. For Frazer, Adonis, Attis, and Osiris are all gods who perish and are resurrected, and their resurrections are tied to fertility rituals involving Spring crops, fertile harvests, and fertility in general. Weston argues that these ancient fertility cults are the basis for the Holy Grail quests in Arthurian romances – the knight encounters an ill or wounded king who is infertile and whose kingdom does not experience a Spring rebirth. By curing the king (the Fisher King in most myths), the questing knight resurrects the dead and restarts the missing Spring and fertility cycle. The implication for Eliot’s poem is that the titular Waste Land is the result of losing these rituals or from the loss of religious faith in general. Ultimately, academics rejected Weston’s argument, but her work remained popular into the 1950s and has led to several articles on Eliot (Kroll 159–173; Surette 223–244). *The Golden Bough* remains influential and was also published in a single-volume abridged version in 1922.

1922 was also a crucial year for Modernism in general. James Joyce published his magnum opus *Ulysses*, Virginia Woolf published her first experimental novel, *Jacob’s Room*, which presaged her later more influential works *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. [Ezra Pound](#), who was responsible for the first serialized version of Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, first began to publish his major work *The Cantos*. Michael North, who edited the excellent W.W. Norton & Co. student edition of *The Waste Land*, has published *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern* through Oxford University Press, which may be useful if you are interested in this very specific moment.

Eliot as a Critic

By 1922, Eliot had already established himself as a literary critic. This allows us to better understand his perspective on poetry and poetry writing than we are able to do with most other authors. Eliot’s most

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famous essay is “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” which was first published in *The Egoist* by Pound, shortly after Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist*, and was republished in a book of Eliot’s collected essays in 1920, *The Sacred Wood*. In the essay, Eliot compares two key concepts: Literary Tradition and the Individual Artist.

Eliot’s argument in this essay is central to the structure and form of *The Waste Land*. In essence, Eliot saw a tension between the literary tradition we all inherit as a part of culture and the individual talent of an artist that is brought to bear on that tradition. A Romantic view would tend to idealize the artist or at least place the artist at the center of this process. A Classical view would do the opposite and look to the literary tradition as central. Eliot sought to avoid this conflict by arguing that the ‘Individual Talent’ indeed existed, but that all traces of the artist’s personality are removed prior to the finalization of good art, leaving only the new work in relation to Tradition without any reflection of the Individual Talent remaining discernible.

Eliot used a metaphor to describe this process: the catalyst. In chemical reactions, a catalyst is necessary for a reaction to occur (or it speeds up a reaction), such as oxidation, which you also know as ‘rusting.’ You likely know about this from the catalytic converter in your automobile, which converts some of the nastier products of a combustion engine into less nasty materials (such as changing toxic carbon monoxide to relatively common carbon dioxide). The crucial part of the metaphor is that in typical catalysis, the catalyst is itself unchanged even though it is necessary. I might begin the process with Carbon Monoxide and Oxygen in the presence of Platinum, and then end the process with Carbon Dioxide and Platinum, but the catalytic Platinum has not been changed in the process nor is it present in the new substance: the Carbon Dioxide. Eliot’s notion was that the artist or Individual Talent served a similar function. The artist had a personal idea and a literary tradition, which he or she brought into contact. Through the Individual Talent, the new poem or work of art is produced, and this also changes the literary tradition. However, the artist is not present in the final product, nor is he or she changed. This is to say, through the artist, Tradition and personal experiences intermingle and create new art, but this new art does not show us anything about the artist personally nor is the artist changed by the process.

In general, this runs contrary to our everyday vision of the Arts. We tend to see ourselves as changed by producing art. It is cathartic. Even more commonly, we tend to regard art as an expression of our personalities. Eliot argued the opposite. The final art product reflects experience and tradition but not the artist him or herself. Good art expresses the Tradition rather than expressing the Individual Talent.

Another critical idea in Eliot's argument is that art exists in a "simultaneous order," which is to say the Tradition described above exists all at the same time in the present. We don't look at the age of a work when determining its influence. Moreover, we may be reacting to a very long tradition even when we are not particularly well aware of it. The tradition itself, not just strong artistic personalities, has led to the current state of art as a whole. Each new work of art also changes the perspective we have on the Tradition as a whole. An American critic like Harold Bloom, at Yale University, expands on this idea to suggest that particular authors are "strong poets" who seek to transform the influence exerted by Tradition. For instance, although Christopher Marlowe was the most artistically successful Elizabethan playwright until Shakespeare, it is virtually impossible for us to consider Marlowe without doing so in the context of Shakespeare's works. In a more comical sense, I might not be able to watch George Lucas' original *Star Wars* films after having seen the Family Guy television satires. The latter work has permanently altered my approach to the former. Tradition, for Eliot, exists as a whole unity, and new works transform our perspective on older works while these older works exert a strong influence on the creation of anything new. Great art is that which transforms the Tradition as a whole. Hence, great works do not express the personal feelings of the Individual Talent (the artist), great works are *impersonal* transformations of the poetic Tradition.

Since the personal biography or individual feelings of the poet are not contained or even discernible in the final artistic product, a new form of critical reading was necessary. Much of the literary criticism up until the 1930s was biographical in nature. Eliot's essay became a touchstone for the American critical movement called the [New Criticism](#). This name derives from John Crowe Ransom's book *The New Criticism*, which he published in 1941. It is primarily a method rather than a purpose or style, and it is apolitical. New Critics looked closely at the text itself and the literary tradition, and they excluded all information relating to the author or biography. Looking for what an author had *meant* to say was termed the "intentional fallacy" in this context, and the New Critics instead looked to what the text *actually says* regardless of intentions, as well as how it fits into Tradition. In other words, how can you read a text as part of a body of discourse instead of making potentially false or misleading assumptions about what the author intended? After all, a poet might lie or fail to understand his or her intentions (or simply not remember them) yet still write a good poem. Even in *The Waste Land*, Eliot did not publish the "Notes" section until after he was published the poem and released it three times. Which "intention" would then be right or most true?

The major critics in this school of thought, the New Criticism, were largely American and largely Southern but had significant ties to various colleges of the University of Oxford: [Cleanth Brooks](#) and [Robert Penn Warren](#) were both Southerners who studied at Vanderbilt University under John Crowe Ransom and then Oxford and wrote their first New Critical works together while professors at Louisiana State University. The British critic William Empson exercised a major influence on the New Critics through his 1930 book *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. Empson argued that there are exactly *seven* forms of ambiguity in literature (not six nor eight...), and close attention to the text rather than the artist or the political context would illuminate these ambiguities in meaning. For instance, a metaphor such as “this strawberry is mathematical” forces the reader to combine two different things: strawberries and mathematics. This is the first and simplest form of ambiguity for Empson, and it does not rely on the author’s intentions nor on a political context.

When you perform a “close reading” or an “explication of text,” you are engaging in the type of critical tradition established by the New Critics based on their interests in T.S. Eliot. This leaves you with a text and a tradition but not an author nor a political motivation. These ideas profoundly influenced the modernist authors we read, although many remained highly political, and they adapted their style of writing accordingly, often in reaction to what Eliot had demonstrated could be done in *The Waste Land*. *The Waste Land*, then, is a poetic instantiation of the type of reading methods and approach to poetry that we see Eliot creating in his essays and subsequently the New Critics popularizing around the world. It has become the primary reading method used in English and Literary Studies programs at virtually every major university in the Western world.

Allusion and Tradition

Eliot begins *The Waste Land* with a phrase that makes us dually aware of allusion and tradition. It anchors his poem and teaches us how to read:

April is the cruelest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain. (Eliot 1–4)

A typical New Critical approach to these first four lines might be something like what follows here. Each of the three progressive tenses

of the verbs (breed, mix, and stir) appear at the end of a line that is enjambed. Enjambment is the continuation of the grammatical phrase across a line break rather than the more traditional restructuring of the poem that is revised below:

April is the cruelest month,
Breeding lilacs out of the dead land,
Mixing memory and desire,
Stirring dull roots with spring rain.

This combination of progressive tenses and enjambment emphasizes the ongoing nature of the moment Eliot describes. It is not simply past, present, or future but rather an ongoing action. However, this emphatically present tense in the ongoing progressive form is confusing because the lines are in the process of continuing across the break.

Likewise, the opening four lines of *The Waste Land* are themselves an allusion to a very old poem, one that is arguably the greatest early English work. These lines echo the opening of the “General Prologue” to Geoffrey Chaucer’s 14th century poem *The Canterbury Tales*. It is worth quoting the entire first stanza of that poem here in order to draw out the full context (in the original Middle English followed by a ‘translation’ into Modern English):

Whan that Aprill, with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote
And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,
And smale foweles maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open eye-
(So priketh hem Nature in hir corages);
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes
To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
And specially from every shires ende
Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,
The hooly blisful martir for to seke
That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seeke. (1–18)

When April, with his showers sweet,

Has pierced the drought of March to the root
 And bathed every vine in such liquor,
 As that which engenders virtue in the flower.
 When the West Wind also with his sweet breath
 Has inspired in every farmland
 The tender crops, and the young Sun
 Has run half his course in the month of Aries,
 And small birds make melodies,
 That sleep all the night with open eye—
 (So 'pricks' him Nature in his courage);
 Then folks desire to go on pilgrimages
 And pilgrims seek strange shores abroad
 To distant shires, known in sundry lands.
 And especially from every shire's end
 Of England, to Canterbury they wander,
 The holy blissful martyr to seek
 Who has helped them, when they were sick.

This allusion by Eliot to Chaucer (a poet with whom virtual all of his audience would be familiar) sets out a few immediate associations: springtime, fecundity, fertility, religious faith and service, ancient fertility gods and astrology, the healing power of prayer, and pilgrimage in England after a sickness. In Chaucer, the pilgrims all set out for Canterbury Cathedral to offer prayers in thanks for healings and as a sign of devotion, but like all springtime creatures, they spend some of their time in a tavern sharing stories about other "Spring" activities, largely sexual or reproductive. In Eliot, you will find precisely the opposite. The call "Hurry up please, it's time" is the barman's "closing time" call in Britain, but unlike Chaucer's characters in their own pub talking about Spring and reproduction, Eliot's characters discuss the [First World War](#) and abortion. Eliot is producing the opposite of Chaucer, but he sets it in the same location in order to make the contrast obvious. The contrast to Chaucer on this point of reproduction and rebirth is vitally important to the poem's sense of anxiety and modernity. For Eliot's poem, April is no longer the source for "shoures soote" (sweet showers or sweet rain that is compared to liquor bringing the plants all back to life and reproduction). Instead, April is cruel because it *forces* things back to life that would rather remain in hibernation, such as "breeding / Lilacs out of the dead land" or "stirring dull roots with spring rain." The allusion is clear, but the transformation is profound. As we continue to read through Eliot's poem, the implication appears to be that there is no "hooly blisful martir" for the modern reader to seek

or pray to for help “whan that they were seeke.” The loss of religious faith is devastating for them in the poem.

Eliot’s “dead land” in *The Waste Land* also points us to a different context from Chaucer’s. Something in Chaucer’s poem makes April a wonderful month of rebirth into Spring, fertility, and reproduction. For Eliot, April does not cure the illness of the dead land, which gestures to many other literary texts. For instance, in Sophocles’ ancient play *Oedipus Rex*, the barren land and the failure of the crops is a reflection of Oedipus’ failures as king to his people and his incest. Such imagery abounds in the Medieval Holy Grail narratives, such as the Fisher King, who is ill, wounded, and has failing crops in his wasteland. Eliot may be alluding to Chaucer, but it seems that he is doing so in order to show how his poem differs. It reflects the loss of Chaucer and tradition rather than the comforts it can offer, and the result is a ruined and infertile country. By implication, this is the new vision for Britain just after the First World War. From the great literary tradition that led to the Enlightenment, Democracy, and industrial revolutions, Eliot now only sees “A heap of broken images” (22). Nonetheless, by alluding to these broken pieces of the tradition, he can claim “these fragments I have shored against my ruins” (430), which means he is attempting to create some new form of unity from the scraps. He has also changed forever how you will read Chaucer.

The most important feature here is that four lines of poetry have sent us off to find a full context deriving from a very long literary tradition. This is how the New Criticism works, and it is also implicit in Eliot’s poetic style. You cannot read *The Waste Land* without being sent off to find other materials that are transformed by Eliot’s new context yet that shape what his poem is able to do – we now look at *The Canterbury Tales* from a post-Enlightenment perspective, yet the fertility and richness of that poem creates the very thing Eliot’s modernist reader would yearn for without having: rebirth to an earlier and purer state. Our reading is fostered by close attention to the style and form, to allusions, and we could go even further by questioning Chaucer’s pagan references to Zephyrus, astronomy, and fertility gods while also alluding to Virgil’s *Georgics* (Virgil wrote *The Aeneid*, which continued the narrative of Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*).

As a New Critic would point out, this painful difference between the health of Chaucer and the illness of Eliot is even implied in those progressive verb tenses that are emphasized by falling at the end of an enjambed line: “breeding,” “mixing,” and “stirring” (1–3). They are all in the present tense noting some ongoing action, but progressive verb tenses are indeterminate, ambiguous, and link the past with the present and the future. This is the condition of modernity. Chaucer’s verb tenses

are distinct and indicate a profoundly different worldview: “When April, with his showers sweet, / *Has pierced* the drought of March to the root.” This is the Present Perfect tense (has pierced) and it is followed by the simple past tense (And *bathed* every vine) as well as the present tense (virtue *engenders* the flower). For Chaucer, the ongoing and indeterminate progressive tense is rare, whereas for Eliot it is ever-present – for Chaucer spring has arrived and people want to go on a pilgrimage, whereas for Eliot things have been “stirring” for quite a while and do not seem to be arriving at any conclusion apart from just going on stirring for a while longer.

These allusions are only the beginning. The poem, as you will discover, obsessively refers to works across the entire English canon (as well as Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, French, and German literatures). The closing references to the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* play similar games with language and tense using the syllable “Da” in the imperative form of the verbs “control,” “give,” and “compassion.” We are again sent off to another religious text at the close of the poem, as if to ask if another religious tradition might provide the rebirth in its language that Eliot is no longer able to offer in the modern world. The method also forces the reader to consider the literary tradition and the form of the poem while at the same time alienating the reader from any sense of Tom Eliot the poet as a person, which was Eliot’s critical vision in the first place. In other words, don’t look at “Tom” – look at the tradition...

Eliot’s Influence

The Waste Land has become perhaps the most influential poem of the 20th century. Its importance to the New Criticism has already been outlined, and the New Criticism is the basis for what nearly every Literature department or program in the world now does on a daily basis. Many poets imitated Eliot (such as [George Orwell](#) in his novel *Keep the Aspidochelone Flying*), they adopted his techniques, or refer back to him. Even more poets responded to his critical ideas and in turn revised their poetic craft based on their reactions to Eliot’s critical ideas. However, Eliot had another much more direct line of influence on Modernism and 20th century literature in general – he founded the influential journal *The Criterion*, he taught the future poet laureate John Betjeman at Highgate School, he influenced the Bloomsbury group of writers, and he became the most important editor and eventually a director at Faber & Faber, the most important publishing house in London for Modernist literature. Faber & Faber has been the publisher of choice for virtually all major literary authors in Britain since the 1930s, and Eliot’s influence as an editor is hard to overlook, in particular

amongst the modernists and also because Faber published Eliot's *The Criterion* from 1926 onward, which reviewed the books by the same authors. This was the institutional and commercial moment of success for Modernism.

At Faber & Faber, Eliot was the editor for many major modernist authors' works, including W.H. Auden, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, [Djuna Barnes](#), Sylvia Plath, William Golding, Dylan Thomas, Tom Stoppard, [Samuel Beckett](#), and [Lawrence Durrell](#). This meant that Eliot had a direct influence over the shape and direction of the publishing career of virtually an entire generation of authors, both British and American, since Faber was their publisher of choice. He personally revised and cut Djuna Barnes' novel *Nightwood* (which is still a matter of some debate), encouraged Lawrence Durrell to continue *Justine* as *The Alexandria Quartet* (a four volume series that resists Eliot's influence), and frequently wrote the introductions to books he wished to have interpreted in particular ways (mostly to match his own critical vision). This would be akin, in our contemporary 21st century context, to Stephen Spielberg being a highly successful film director as well as the producer and editor of most films made in Hollywood as well as a member of the Board of Directors of 20th Century Fox. It is an enormous concentration of authority and influence in a single person, and thereby Eliot's approval became necessary, crucial even, for much of the literary production in English from the 1930s to the 1960s. Literary Studies cannot ignore Eliot.

In his article "Rejuvenating T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*," Ghanim Samarrai brings attention to the extensive Arabic translations of Eliot's poem and its deep influence on modern Arabic poetry, especially Badr As-Sayâb's *Unshudat al-Matar* (*Hymn of Rain*). This difficulty of translation is very much a part of Eliot's original work, and the new cultural context of rainfall and Spring are hard to reconcile with the spiritual and cultural context within which the poem was created, but this is also part of how literature moves between and across cultures. Similar transplantations and translations have occurred as *The Waste Land* moved into and influenced Modern Greek poetry, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Hindi, Bangla, Russian, and so forth.

The Origins of the Poem

Although we see Eliot's name on the cover of the book and his Estate received the royalties while it was under copyright, in reality it was a work composed by Eliot and then heavily revised by both Ezra Pound and Eliot's first wife Vivienne Haigh-Wood Eliot. The revisions are substantial, but the Eliot Estate did eventually allow a reproduction of

the original typescript of the poem to be produced posthumously in 1974 after the copy was rediscovered. Notably, the book was edited by Eliot's second wife Valerie Eliot, who titled it *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*. Vivienne Eliot's annotations are significant and included in the book, but because Vivienne died without a clear estate apart from her husband, whom she never divorced, Valerie Eliot has claimed executive control over the copyright on Vivienne's diaries and literary papers in order to prevent access to those papers held at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Few people have seen these papers, but Carole Seymour-Smith has written a biography based on them, *Painted Shadow*, although she did not have the right to quote the materials.

Notable changes include cutting the original epigram drawn from [Joseph Conrad](#)'s novel *Heart of Darkness* and replacing it with the Greek epigram describing the Sybil. The first 54 lines were also cut from the poem, which removed a drunken ramble around London by "old Tom, boiled to the eyes" in his stupor. This first section is titled "HE DO THE POLICE IN DIFFERENT VOICES," which draws attention to the various ventriloquisms across the poem as a whole, such as the young woman who speaks from lines 8–18 and 35–42 or the conversation between various women in a bar in section 2 "A Game of Chess" in our version. It would, in fact, be difficult to understand the "A Game of Chess" section without knowing that Eliot is impersonating various "voices" in the poem, in this instance young women talking about their men coming home from the First World War, a barmaid calling closing time ("Hurry up please, it's time"), and so forth.

Many parts of the poem in its typescript state were cut or revised heavily by Pound. His influence on the creation of the poem and its final form was profound. It is both possible and even quite reasonable to interpret Eliot's notion of "impersonality" or the absence of the "catalytic" poet from the final poetic product as a result of his personal relationships and Pound's heavy influence on the poem. We might accept the repeated references to Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* as a personal reference to the death of Eliot's father in 1919, which would revise the opening image in the typescript of "old Tom, boiled to the eyes" in his drunkenness. The repeated references to *The Tempest* are to a scene in the play in which the spirit Ariel tricks Ferdinand into believing his father has perished during a shipwreck:

Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes.
Nothing of him that doth fade,

But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell. (I.ii.539–545)

The implication is that Eliot's struggle over his own father's death played a major role in shaping the poem. Likewise, it would seem impossible to closely attend to the text of the poem without noticing which portions were revised or even written by both Pound and Vivienne Eliot. In general, it becomes difficult to explore the text fully without having recourse to the biography of the author, which is something Eliot wished to avoid. Consequently, we are presented with an interpretive choice between Eliot's theory of impersonality versus the biographical context of the poem. That, however, is a choice to be made by individual readers on their own.

Questions for Self-Review

1. Would Eliot want us to talk about him personally as the creative artist behind his poetry?
2. Does the form of *The Waste Land* relate to Eliot's opinions as a literary critic? If so, how?
3. What does professor Mount argue about the importance of the Sanskrit words "Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata" at the end of the poem?
4. How does allusion function in Eliot's poem?
5. Is it necessary to know about Eliot's life or the social conditions of inter-war London in order to discuss *The Waste Land* as a work of art?

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Author: James Gifford
Editor: Lucie Kotesovska