

Mythology and Intertextuality in T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*.

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

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Abstract

Literature is often viewed as made up or fabricated stories to give aesthetic pleasure to readers. The purpose of literature is entertainment, amusement and mostly it creates a way to escape from the real chaotic world for us. It is not always us who tells the story, sometimes stories tell us. Some characters have so much in them that single tale about them is not enough. They continue to occur within popular culture from centuries to centuries. This is why, throughout the ages, authors get inspired from ancient tales, epic, legends, myths. This thesis investigates why T.S.Eliot referred to several mythological characters in his poem *The Wasteland*. People like to know about the history. If there is any philosophical idea connected to mythology that can be applied to our modern society then, mythological stories from the historical past will naturally attract the new generation. Applying the concept of archetypes, this thesis will attempt to give some answers to why myths reappear in different form of literature over and over again. The primary material chosen for the work is Eliot's masterpiece *The Wasteland* and several other works of art will be discussed to show the spectacular stories about the characters. The whole research will provide an insight into how the characters were not mere options for the poem but they were needed to give it a proper shape.

Key Words: *The Wasteland*, ancient times, mythology, mythic method, archetype, intertextuality, birth-death-rebirth, past and present

Dedication

This is for my dearest beautiful mother who once told me, “Study literature, it will give you mental peace”.

No matter how beautiful word that exists in world, there is no such word by what I can express my love for you.

Acknowledgement

All praises to the better planer, the creator of everything, the divine entity who planned me to guide through a completely different direction that I have never imagined I will choose.

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My gratitude to my supervisor, Anika Saba miss is eternal. The way she patiently guided me throughout my dissertation journey, I can never be thankful enough to her. As I grow older, I aspire to acquire all the human qualities and strong feminine image she posses though I will have a hard time in doing so.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

God wrote stories and to make the stories come true, he created universe. When it was time to hear a story, he made man. We cannot disagree with God's choice after all the rich variety of worldwide mythology has been considered. Stories exist on earth from the beginning of civilization or even before that as it is a way of learning. Myths are more than mere stories that are based on tradition. It serves a profound purpose in modern and ancient history. Myths are usually of unknown origin. Some may have factual origin that ostensibly relates actual events. Those involve superhumans and extraordinary events where time is mostly unspecified. Some myths associate with religious beliefs and rest of the myths are completely fictional.

Classical time is full of myths. There was no school to learn from and no proper communication system is found. We can get an idea about their way of life and their social system from different stories. There are no proper written records. They had to survive by fighting with nature and with their enemy. In this struggle, many have sought to assert their dominance over others. In order to maintain their lineage, they provide the hearer with a truth or the value system of their family and culture. Alan Watts explains myth as the accomplishment of the inmost meaning of the "universe and of human life". He says, "Myth is to be defined as a complex of stories – some no doubt fact, and some fantasy – which, for various reasons, human beings regard as demonstrations of the inner meaning of the universe and of human life." (7) Myths answer timeless questions and serve as a compass to each generation. This was the main purpose of myths. The myths of a golden age give people hope that there are great leaders who will improve their lives. The whole concept is related to the survival of man on earth. Myths are still relevant today as they were to the ancient days. It is hard to find a nation that does not have

their own mythological stories. Ancient myths show modern people a glimpse of how people thought in the past, what they considered important, how their morals worked, etc. By comparing to past, people learn what to change and how to develop. Ancient mythology in western culture is represented by the epics *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, whose creator is considered to be Homer. He wrote his works in the 7th century BC, and they were recorded only two centuries later by the Athenian tyrant Pisistratus, and by then they had been transmitted orally by the Greeks. So, myths are first found in oral tradition in ancient days. With time people learnt how to record evidences of extraordinary events, stories about gods and goddesses. In this situation, was it too far for myths to take a literary form?

This paper is going to discuss about myths and how mythology can bring richness into literature. An extraordinary poem, *The Wasteland*, written by T.S Eliot will be used as the primary text. *The Wasteland* is a complex examination of twentieth century, a major work by T.S. Eliot. This poem is one of the most influential work and one of the most talked about work of Eliot. It is a long poem which includes four hundred and thirty-four lines and is divided into five parts. Sometimes when a text is enriched with lots of traditional information, it needs background annotations. In the original poem Eliot included footnotes. He borrowed direct and indirect ideas from different sources and even from his own writings and added the source of those additional piece of information on the designated part of the actual text. He was deeply influenced by mythical works, anthropology during he was writing this poem as he includes mythical characters to give the real image of contemporary Europe and shows the link up with past with present.

The world has seen a lot of changes in the first two decades of 20th century. Europe and America witnessed wars and revolution. At the same time western world witnessed a devastating

pandemic which is also known as Spanish flu. So, there were a lot of things going on at that time and the tragic consequences affected not only the common man and the soldiers but also the intellectuals. T. S Eliot and other contemporary intellectuals have deep effect of that tough time. Eliot was having some personal problems for quite a long time in between 1910 to 1920 or 22 before the poem got published. According to some critics and some sources he was having problems with his wife Vivienne. Pinion referred to a biographical note, “A T.S Eliot Companion Life and Works”, where it is said that Eliot reduced the five lines to three “on the closed car and the game of chess in *The Waste Land* referring to Vivienne, Eliot's wife” (102). There were definitely different aspects that were influence to his mind whether it was mythological, symbolic or realistic. Now, it is already clear that during the whole time Eliot was thinking about different things and reading different type of write ups. Because this paper is focused on the uses of mythology in his poem, it is a must to mention that Eliot was deeply influenced by James Joyce’s *Ulysses* where Joyce used myths. He has frankly talked about Frazer’s book *The Golden Bough* and Jessie L. Westons’ *From Ritual to Romance* and that he acknowledges his debt to these books.

For a literary figure the most important element is words. Different writer can express same idea in different way with the help of words. Ability of playing with words brings a poetic persona nearer to perfection. Some poets write sonnets but because sonnets have premade structures, there are rules to follow which sometimes restrict possibilities. The interesting fact is, despite of these rules of maintaining structures, writers show their creativeness. For a writer these things are pretty simple and that allows the writer to make a change in the text. He can make a change by adding or by elimination. He can also change the elements in order to create artistic meanings. An artist can use his words to connect tradition to contemporary, to introduce

science as novelty and also, he can use myth to bring richness in the writing. When a writer relates myths in his writing, it does not remain just the myth. Other phenomena of the text are also related to the myth. It creates variation in a text than the flat narratives. All these reasons give myths the appearance to be timeless. Uses of myths make the essence of the text richer to reader's eyes. But to understand the content of the text a reader must be aware of the tradition and history. For example, Aeschylus' play *Prometheus Bound* is related to Percy Shelley's play *Prometheus Unbound*. Interestingly it is related to many other works like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* and Hesiod's works and Gustav Meyrink's *Der Golem*. All these works containing myths are related to each other. They may have some concepts in common but each of them has something new to offer to readers.

Mythologies are the stories that explain the experience of the world and people. It narrates extraordinary events with no attempt to prove. In western literary culture different narrative genres like fables, fairy tales, etiological tales, folktales, epics, sagas and legends can be found that are related to myths. Fables are untrue story that ends up with a moral message. They are unspecific as to time and space. Myths, by contrast are most likely to be identify by name or specific details. For example, Paris and Hector were son of Priam, King of Troy. Epics are found worldwide. We find the "Troy" reference in Homers *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, famous epics till date. We can think of sacred epic to Hindu community *Mahabharata* and famous ancient Egyptian epic, *Epic of Gilgamesh* that took many mythical episodes. These are historical narratives. Sagas are the same narrative style like epics with heroic endeavors, just not composed in a form of poetry. Legends are usually traditional tales that also have historical basis. *King Arthur* and *Robin Hood* are famous legends. This is the difference between legends and myths as some myths may not have historical background. But then again, all of these are different forms

of myths. So, we see that over the ages, different writers have presented myths in their writings in various ways. Eliot has used three important mythical characters in his poem *The Wasteland*, that helps the poem to express its meaning in an artistic way.

One of the famous characters in wasteland is Sibyl. Eliot quoted her words in the epigraph of the poem. Sibyl was an ancient Roman prophetess who wished for eternal life from God Apollo. She was given eternal life but without eternal youth. So, she was growing older and older. The worst part of her life was she had to see her sagging skin for eternity with the memories of beautiful youth and could never escape the situation. She was so doomed that she felt like her soul was trapped in her body as she was neither dead nor living. All she wanted in her eternal life was death. Without death her life had become barren and meaningless. She could not predict a good future coming ahead. Sibyl, at the very starting of the poem gives a sense of despair in the desolate land. Fisher King is the king of that desolate land. His story has a connection with the Holy Grail that contains both biblical and mythological references. We can find the mention of the last supper and the Holy Grail in Celtic myth. We can also find the Holy Grail and Fisher King reference in the first English literature that was wrote on a French King Le Morte Aurther. Holy Grail is kind of direct essence of Jesus Christ. It was the dish that caught the blood of Jesus Christ when he was pierced by a spear while hanging on the cross. There is a connection of birth to rebirth. At some extent it also hints the second coming of Jesus Christ in this earth which will be the rebirth. Where Fisher King serves the hope in the poem, Tiresias unites all the events and characters in the poem. Tiresias is from Greek mythology who, is represented as bisexual in the poem as he has both male and female features. We can also find his reference in many ancient literary texts including *Odyssey*, *Oedipus Rex*, *Metamorphosis* etc. Tiresias serves as a unifying figure in *The Wasteland* linking the ancient and modern worlds. It is

rebuilding a myth of unity in the modern world. All the three characters play significant roles in making a great frame for the poem. Eliot shows his craftsmanship as he created new roles for the old characters in his poem.

After having a close reading of *The Wasteland*, one can critically acclaim that everything is connected. Eliot has used archetypal imagery in his poem. Archetypal literary theory interprets a text by focusing on recurring myths and archetypes in the narrative, symbol, images and character types in the literary works. Eliot utilized this imagery where the wasteland is another symbolic world. In 1934 Maud Bodkin wrote her book *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* where she introduced archetypal criticism for the first time. She addressed the utilization of archetypes by different authors in his book and also applied Carl Jung's theories. Bodkin noted the patterning in *The Wasteland*, "the reading over of certain of the lines come to seem like a ritual entrancing." (303) This is further developed by Northrop Frye who wrote the book *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* in 1957 to develop the idea of archetypal patterns in poetry. Frye expands: "From such a point of view, the narrative aspect of literature is a recurrent act of symbolic communication: in other words a ritual." (104-5) According to Frye's classification, "the hero of myth is a divine being, superior in kind to other men and to the environment of other men. The hero of romance then remains essentially human although he is superior in degree to other men and to his environment." (104-5)

In *The Wasteland*, we can sense that all human wants to escape from the horrible reality of suffering and want to endeavour the beauty of peace but somehow their journey ends in such wasteland. Wasteland's main poetic device, the mythical method originates in the modernist impulse. Eliot uses the mythical method to reinvent the primitive myth of death and rebirth in the contemporary circumstances. This paper is a theoretical study of why a modern poet like

T.S.Eliot incorporates mythology with the help of intertextuality in his poem *The Wasteland* as a form of reference. As a theoretical study, I will focus on the interpretations of *The Wasteland* from the perspective of archetypal criticism where archetypes triggers the collective unconsciousness that every individual shares. Within my scope, I will try to trace the origins of the three mythological characters: Sybil, Fisher King and Tiresias whom are present in *The Wasteland* and analyze the purpose of using the idea of them as a literary form.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Mythological characters allow modern readers to have a better understanding about the place and time where the characters flourished. In ancient time, the characters existed in oral tradition but the information which is known today about those characters derives from the literature which is extant from that time. Great Greek hero Achilles' mother convinced him to fight in the Trojan War saying that the war in Troy will never be forgotten and people will write stories about his victories for thousands of years. Achilles joins the war and fights for the Greek not to conquer Troy but to be immortal in history. In order to be remembered in history many hero and rulers tried their best to make themselves phenomena. Writers and poets are no exception. Today we read Homer, Virgil, Ovid and others to know the stories about great mythological heroes. Sometimes these heroes gain popularity based on the epics and legends surround them and not because of their scant details but "Historical facts and figures, though real and important, are often seen only through the filter of authors who might decide to emphasize or ignore certain facts." (Rodriguez 1) So, it can be said that each ancient writer used the basic facts about a character and created a facsimile that suited into his own literary needs. We see modern authors referring to those books and including mythological characters in their writings. After a close reading of *The Wasteland* a general curiosity arises, what made T.S.Eliot to pick certain characters like Fisher King, Tiresias, Sibyl from mythology and represent them in his masterpiece *The Wasteland* ?

In *The Wasteland*, Fisher King is wounded and looking for a pure soul to save him from his misery. Fisher King is healed later by chaste knight Percevals' passage who, is in search of Holy Grail through Fisher King's land. The Holy Grail has direct connection with the core of

Christianity. About the Holy Grail, Adell states, “If, as we believe, this is the cup that Jesus used at the Last Supper and some say that Joseph of Arimathea also collected drops of blood of Our Lord in it, this is a unique relic. There are even those who promise it can give life and even immortality” (Adell, 2014). There are religious beliefs that the vessel holds the magic elixir which is in another word: immortality. This is the main reason behind the quest for Holy Grail. In an analysis about the Holy Grail Route, Sanagustín-Fons, Gregory and Martínez-Quintana claims that, “In twelfth-century Europe, with events such as the Crusades with their huge influence, stories and legends of the Holy Grail appear throughout the West spread by The Grail Tales by the troubadour, Chrétien de Troyes.” (39) In 12th century Fisher King first appears in Chrétien de Troyes’ Grail romance, *Perceval, the Story of the Grail*. Later, Fisher King appeared in several legends and romances. In telling the stories of the Grail Quest, injury is a common theme. This is a reason that Fisher King is mostly seen in stories where society is shattered and is in desperate need of a spiritual direction. According to Shukhbir Singh, “Eliot uses the medieval myth of the Fisher King as a structural foundation for *The Waste Land* from which he projects through juxtaposition of moral and cultural malaise and proposes by implication a possible remedy for a healthy human survival in modern times.” He thinks, “Eliot incorporates within the primary myth of the Fisher King the secondary myths of Christ’s Crucifixion, Buddha’s fire sermon, Hyacinthus, Philomel, Diana, and Prajapati to enhance its suggestiveness.” (60) Among all other myths, the fertility myth is so prominent in *The Wasteland*. Eliot mentioned he got influenced about the fertility myths from James George Frazer’s book *The Golden Bough* in several interviews and his notes about *The Wasteland*. Lauren Haas states, “In tandem with a variety of other mythical allusions, The Fisher King is a fertility myth on which *The Waste Land* is based.” (31) To some extent the Grail quest also hints the second coming of Jesus Christ in this

earth which will be his rebirth. Helen Gardner points out that the poem achieves its unity “by constant references to the underlying myth, and to related myths of death and re-birth”. (87) The present days and society shown in Eliot’s poem, lacks the morality. Lauren Haas about the revival of myth states that, “Eliot employs the myth of The Fisher King to symbolize his morally barren society.” (31) This can be a reason behind search of quest became an active image in the poem. Thus, the reader can view Fisher King as a questing hero. Milton Miller observes that “one of the most inclusive of the narrative metaphors of the poem is that of the active quest, the Grail quest, which gives the poem its name, shape, and movement”. (442) Some critics think differently about the connection of Fisher King with quest for Holy Grail. Stephanie thinks, “Eliot’s intention with Weston and Frazer’s texts does not seem to be to prompt readers to search for the Holy Grail or to ruminate on the affect on the land by a lame Fisher King.” He expresses his suspicion based on Eliot’s own description of the usefulness of the texts he got influenced from and from the complication surrounding discussion of Tiresias that, “Eliot wanted to layer the fragments of the poem so that personas became as intricately woven together as the mythological Attis and Adonis as well as the tangled Grail legend.” (42)

Readers and critics may have different perspective about different parts and characters of the poem but one direct message the poem gives us is that everything is connected. Eliot chose Tiresias as a narrator for his poem who connected a lot of characters and aspects in it. Tiresias is seen as an essential character in the poem for the readers because of Eliot’s references to Tiresias in his notes. Eliot quoted Ovid as the source for Tiresias. Ovid included over 250 myths to drag the reader through time and space and to present the journey from life to death in his book *Metamorphoses*. Homer’s *Odyssey* is considered to be the first literary work where Tiresias is found. However, Tiresias is found in other literary works. *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles that was

first performed around 429 BC. In the play, a small role of Teiresias explains the dramatic sarcasm while developing the theme of blindness he held responsible for predicting the fate of the mythical Greek king of Thebes, Oedipus. He discloses Oedipus' destiny saying, "that is in Apollo's hand, and he will do it" (1. 378). In this play, Teiresias is a witness of human fate and his powers are given by Gods. Tiresias has knowledge of future and sense of destiny. Thus, he embodies absolute truth about himself: "the prophet in whom, of all men, lives the incarnate truth" (I. 298). In "Apollinaire's Male Heroine" Albert Bermel discusses the French play *Les Mamelles de Tiresias* (The Breasts of Tiresias) that follows,

"As a fictitious figure, a literary concept, Tiresias is all very well. As a human being he would be insufferable, politically and morally neutral, so confident of his foresight, so complacent about his superior function and other people's miseries that he would never stick his neck out. He is a preacher who has no stake in the life around him, only a faith in the inexorability of fate. He has belonged to both sexes; now he transcends sex, which is like saying that he transcends living." (Bermel 180-181).

Tiresias has a dramatic appearance in Homer's *Odyssey*. In *Odyssey*, Odysseus seeks for Tiresias about his voyage back to his motherland, Ithaca after the Trojan War in the underworld as Tiresias was dead by then. The motivation behind meeting Tiresias given in Book 10 of *The Odyssey*, translated by Murray depicts the significance of Tiresias as a soothsayer in ancient time. I would like to quote the conversation between Odysseus and Circe where she states,

"So I spoke, and the beautiful goddess at once made answer: "Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, Odysseus of many devices, remain now no longer in my house against your will; but you must first complete another journey, and come to the house of Hades and dread Persephone, to seek prophecy from the ghost of Theban Teiresias, the blind seer,

whose mind remains steadfast. To him even in death Persephone has granted reason, that he alone should have understanding, but the others flit about as shadows.” (10.487-495; Murray 393-395).

The Theban Tiresias appears “bearing his golden staff in hand” knowing the purpose of the visit asks Odysseus politely, “Why have you left the light of the sun and come here to behold the dead and the place where there is no joy?” As he has foreknowledge about the upcoming events Tiresias gives Odysseus hint about his valuable advice saying, “Draw back from the pit and take away your sharp sword, so that I may drink of the blood and speak the truth to you.” (11.90-96; Murray 406-407)

The root of Tiresias resides in Greek mythology who is represented as bisexual in Wasteland as he has both male and female features. Calder considers Tiresias, “a representative of both sexes; a voice of Buddha who preaches against lust and Eliot echoes St Augustine's rejection of sensual temptation" (57) Mayer sees Tiresias as a prophet. He states, “Tiresias appears when he does because it is at this point in his experience that the protagonist takes on the Tiresias identity as the climax of his continuing discovery of his prophetic identity through the voices of the other prophets” (250). He argues, “Tiresias is no afterthought, but an indicator of Eliot’s profound intentions in the poem” (250) To some critic, Tiresias is a central consciousness who somehow reflects Eliot’s own suffering while writing the poem and to some other critics, Tiresias is brought in the poem just to hold the prophetic tone. For Williamson, Tiresias “is not a character in the fortune; but he is the supreme metamorphosis that brings together all the metamorphic transformations and thus qualified to summarize their experience” (202). Eliot took Tiresias from mythology but presented him differently in his poem. In Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Jove and Juno asks Tiresias to give his opinion on between men and women, who receives the

most pleasure from lovemaking? Eliot thinks Tiresias is the perfect judge as he quotes in his notes, “He knew both sides of love” (Ovid III.333) within the passage from *Metamorphoses*. In “Outing T. S. Eliot”, Suzanne Churchill examines Tiresias’s purpose in *The Waste Land* saying,

“Tiresias represents . . . a sexual dualism that might better be described as a chiasmus of heterosexuality. His hermaphroditic qualities—“Old man with wrinkled female breasts”—also cross gender lines, collapsing the male and female poles of heterosexuality (. . .); in other words, Tiresias’s borderline sexuality ‘transgenders’ rather than ‘homosexualizes’ the poem.” (24)

So, the sexuality of Tiresias in the poem is different from that of mythology because he is neither sexually active nor is he given the physical characteristics of only one gender at a time, and this change from the myth allows Eliot to expand Tiresias’s role.

Eliot has used some other prophets in his poem and the first one mentioned in the poem is the Sibyl. In ancient Roman history, Sibyl (Sibylla as singular) was treated as a title; a general name given to various prophetesses who prophesied in a state of ecstasy. Sibyls were present in various places. Also, Sibyls can be found in both Greek and Roman literature. As per most of the critics of *The Wasteland*, Sibyl was a Roman prophetess. In this paper, I will try to find her Roman background. To trace the origin I would like to refer to Gillmeisters’ research on what he blamed ancient writers for creating myth. According to him from those mythical stories, modern historiography accepted the Roman Sibyl as a real character and quoted her as a fact. He claims, “one principle myth about Sibyl has been formed in research: that she was something more than merely a culture figure.” and makes a rhetoric in the title of his work if Sibyl was a “ritual reality” or “literary construction”? (1) To trace the root he goes far back in history and finds out,

“Indeed, there is no archaeological evidence which would confirm that Sybil was present in Cumae, and the oldest literary sources come from the turn of the 3rd and 2nd century B.C. They say only about the existence of the tradition according to which there was a place in Cumae, in which Sybil, coming either from Cumae or from Erythrae, gave prophecies. (13-4)

Cumae was a Greek occupied town in Roman landscape popular with the Roman aristocracy. This is why it has a connection to Greek culture. However, the Cumae or Erythrae debate is not disclosed as famous artists and writers referred to different places as the origin of Sibyl in their works. But we can come to a decision by looking at some notable works by different artists that Sibyl was from Cumae. Geoffrey Hill referred to the Sibyl's “mouthy cave” in the poem “After Cumae” in *For the Unfallen*. In a science fiction “To Bring the Light” David Drake suggests that the Cumaeen Sibyl was a time traveler who arrived in Cumae from a thousand years to make accurate prophesies about Remus and Romulus that they would indeed find Rome. The epigraph to T. S. Eliot's poem *The Wasteland* has a quote from the *Satyricon* by Petronius where Trimalchio states, “For I indeed once saw with my own eyes the Sibyl at Cumae hanging in her jar, and when the boys asked her, “Sibyl, what do you want?” she answered “I want to die.” (Eliot et al 75) According to Gillmeisters’ findings, “In Latin written sources Sibyl appeared in the 2nd century B.C in Plautus’ *Pseudulos* dated to 191, and in a preserved fragment of Calpurnius Pison’s *Annales*, dated to the second half of the 2nd century B.C.” (17) Sibyls were popular in Rome. She appeared in coins in Rome in a big quantity and that became a popular medium of exchange. “For the first time a sibylline symbol appeared in Rome on a coin issued in 194 B.C by Publius Sulla, the son of a famous *decemviri* from the period of the Second Punic War, the main author of introduction of the *Ludi Apollinares*” (16) Only aristocrats and educated

people had the authority on the Sibylline books and records. Gillmeister claims, “According to Suetonius’ narrative, Princeps ordered to gather all Latin and Greek prophetic manuscripts and burnt all but the sibylline collection, of which he still selected only certain fragments.” (20)

In *Wasteland*, Sibyl wished for eternal life from God Apollo which was given but without eternal youth. Graham in his research titled, “The Cumaean Sibyl: Cultural Trauma and the Elision of the Feminine Body from Western Orinary Mythos” thinks, “The idea of the individual mythic body as the site of an individual traumatic event that through its paradoxical symbolic structure becomes representative of cultural trauma motivates Eliot’s final selection of the Cumaean Sibyl to head his poem.” (4) Beside the representation of individual and cultural trauma he points out three sources that have close relation to the Sibylline myth with *The Wasteland*’s epigraph: “Ovid’s telling of the origin and nature of the Cumaean Sibyl’s longevity, Dionysus of Halicarnassus’ account of King Tarquini’s encounter with the Sibyl, and the Sibyl’s speech to Aeneas in Book VI of *Aeneid*.” (5) This particular Sibyl in *The Wasteland*, was possessed by a god Apollo. The characteristics of Sibyl have similarities with the Sibyl from *Aeneid* as she channels her predictions through the god Apollo. In the *Aeneid*, the Sibyl is introduced as, “But loyal Aeneas seeks the citadel over which high Apollo presides, and in the distance, an immense cave, the secret rooms of the dreadful Sibyl, into whom the Delian seer breathes great mind and spirit and lays bare the future.” (Virgil 6.9-12) Among other authors, Virgil was the poet who expressed the popularity of Sibyl and the Sibylline mantic in Rome in his work in a way that makes the critics think, perhaps Virgil knew some oraculum sibyllinum (Sibyls’ oracles) and drew from them. The importance of the Sibyl can also be seen in Book VI of the *Aeneid*,

“Then to Apollo and Trivia, I will build a temple of solid marble and will initiate festival days in the name of Apollo. Great sanctuaries wait in our kingdom for you as well. For here I will also place your prophecies and secret stories told to my people, and will consecrate chosen men, Nourishing One.” (Aeneid 6.69-74)

In Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, the Sybil informs Aeneas that she has lived for seven hundred years and that her lifetime will in fact be a millennium. (XIV) Her entire life was traumatic to her. Ovid narrates a part of that journey which Virgil ignores by describing Aeneas’ return to the surface world. The noticeable part of this narration is, Aeneas acknowledges Sibyl as a leader. “From there, taking weary steps on a rising path, he softened his hardship through conversation with his Cumaean leader.” And when he was heading back to the surface world, “he took the terrible way through the shady twilight” and [Aeneas] said “Whether you are a goddess in person or only most beloved by the gods, you will always be equal to a goddess to me, and I will confess myself to be in your debt, you, who have wanted me to visit the place of death, and wanted me to escape.” (Ovid 14.120-26) Sibyl was equal to a goddess to a hero like Aeneas. However, all the accounts are found only in literature and not in other recorded form. This is a reason behind Gillmeister’s thoughts about, “one has to state that Sibyl in the Republican Rome did not function in other than literary and antiquary aspect.” (23) Ironically, the lack of evidences, recorded forms and various stories around these characters is what makes them mythological figures. If not, they would be called just another historical figure.

For Eliot, mythological characters – the Fisher King, the hanged man, Tiresias, Sibyl all connect to form a base to some extent; to make a concrete foundation, they have been shown to represent different aspects of life, fragments of culture and everything else even if they lose their

individuality to gain solidity. As Moretti writes, myth in *The Waste Land* has a very specific function: “to tame polyphony, to give it a form and meaning” (227). For me, Suzanne Churchill says it best, “If we as readers recognize our responsibilities as witnesses, then perhaps we will not be so quick to attribute the meaning of a poem to its author’s secret life but will instead recognize the ways in which we ourselves participate in the work that is being done in the poem” (24). Therefore, my paper explores the importance of these characters and the events surrounding them instead of the authors’ personal life experiences.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

3.i. Archetypes and archetypal criticism

The word archetype has its root in two Greek words. Arche means beginning and type means imprint. Archetypes are some recurring pattern or behaviors that are inherited since earliest times. It can be a character, theme, ritual or setting. Ram is an archetype of perfect and ideal man in Hindu culture, Achilles is considered as greatest warrior in Greek and Roman culture.

Similarly, Brutus is an archetype of traitor. Life, death, marriage is common in every religion, community and country. Thus, these are examples of archetypes. Pearson in his book, *The Hero Within: Six Archetypes we Live by* states that, “archetypes are psychological structures, reflected in symbols, images, and themes, common to all cultures and all times” He thinks we experience these archetypes within us as different parts of ourselves but different person can demonstrate them differently. It is often “influenced by its individually, culture, setting and time in history: it means how we see the world, in our own particular view, and how we interpret differently what happens to us.” (178) Archetypal literary theory interprets a text by focusing on recurring myths and archetypes in the narrative, symbol, images and character types in the literary works.

Archetypal criticism argues that archetypes determine the form and function of literary works that, a text meaning is shaped by cultural and psychological myths. Archetypes are the unknowable basic forms personified or concretized in motifs such as the quest or the heavenly ascent, recognizable character types such as the trickster or the hero, symbols such as the apple or snake, or images such as crucifixion (Biddle 25) In 1934, Maud Bodkin wrote a book *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* which is considered as the spark of Archetypal Criticism in literature. To explain archetypal criticism, Nandi refers to great psychologist-philosopher for his

theory of racial memory and archetypes, Carl Jung and then states that, “Archetypal criticism is a branch of literary criticism which investigates and studies repetitive narrative structures, character types, themes, motifs and images that according to Carl Jung are universally shared by people of all cultures.” (58) As Maud Bodkins’ book was a great influence for archetypal literary criticism, 1940-1950s were the years when archetypal criticism had its’ progress. One of the biggest names in the field of archetypal literary criticism is Northrop Frye. He wrote an essay, “The Archetypes of Literature” and continued his ideas, beliefs and notions of this work to write his vastly influential book *Anatomy of Criticism* in 1957. According to Frye literature borrows from history, philosophy and mythology but criticism holds only a sub-position. He makes an interesting statement to conclude the second paragraph of his essay. He says, “criticism would be to art what philosophy is to wisdom and history to action.” (98) He criticizes this hollow nature of criticism by suggesting that they are pseudo- propositions which are statements that seem meaningful at first glance but turn out to be meaningless once they are philosophically analysed. Frye thinks in order to understand every scene or genre we need the help of literary social historians, literary philosopher. To understand archetype we need literary anthropologist but “now that we have got our central pattern of criticism established, all these interests are seen as converging on literary criticism instead of receding from it into psychology and history and the rest.” (101) Frye developed the archetypal approach through four radical ‘mythoi’ which corresponds to the four seasons in the cycle of the natural world that asserts how human lives and their expressions draws influence from the processes of the natural world. He related summer with romance, autumn with tragedy, winter with satire and spring with comedy. To discuss the phases of myth, Frye brings the birth phase at the beginning which he related to spring. The birth of hero happens after defeating the darkness of winter. Frye uses the term

comedy to symbolize spring. Summer initiates romance. The myth of fall is related to sacrifice and isolation of the hero. As autumn is the dying stage of the seasonal calendar, it parallels the tragedy or defeat of the hero. So, tragedy symbolizes autumn. Winter corresponds with darkness as it is the dissolution phase. It is the archetype for irony or satire. Winter is followed by spring. So, if winter represents the collapse of society, spring is not far behind with the birth or revival or resurrection of the hero. In *Anatomy of Criticism* Northrop Frye says, “Archetype means a typical or recurring image. I mean by an archetype a symbol which connects one poem with another ...” Frye sees archetype as the “communicable symbol” thus he thinks “archetypal criticism is primarily concerned with literature as a social fact and as a mode of communication” (99). Frye drew many sources in his works but particularly, his main source was Jung’s account of “collective unconsciousness”.

3.ii. Unconscious realms of mind

Curl Gustav Jung is a Swiss psychoanalyst whose principles have been found to be applicable to nearly all academic disciplines from mythology to religion to quantum physics, and to nearly all aspects of modern life. He was a friend of Sigmund Freud and they collaborated in some of their works. Jung founded Analytical Psychology and his major works were *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* and *Man and His Symbols*. He had different perspective on psychology where Freud put more emphasis on our libidinal or sexual energy behind psychic phenomena, Jung thinks that sexual energy is not the only aspect that is responsible for one’s mental growth or growth of personality or other things. Jung believed that a cluster or constellation can be formed by a group of contents as a feature of personal unconscious. These are complexes according to him. (Jung 6) Freud is famous for his theory on Oedipus complex. He believed that a complex arise due to traumatic childhood experiences. However, Jung went on in search of what it was in psychic

realm that gave a rise to complexes. He found that the root of complexes reside in a deep level of psyche. To him, it is more fundamental than the personal unconscious which he called collective unconscious. Jung believes in a human family and “the collective unconscious is a psychic inheritance of all the members of this family”. These complex psychic predispositions are inherited by human beings. (Jung 6) Jung sees these inherited elements as “primordial images” or “archetypes”. From them myth-forming structural elements become apparent in the unconscious psyche. Thus, the myth and archetypes are projections of the innate psychic phenomena. (Jung 6) Jungian psychoanalysis distinguishes between the personal and ‘collective unconscious’ (Bodkin 20). A devout student of Jung was Maud Bodkin. In *Archetypal Patterns of Poetry* Bodkin referred to Jung where Jung stated that archetypes exist deep in the “collective unconscious” (Bodkin 20) Jung applied the term “archetype” to what he called “primordial images”, of repeated patterns of common human experience from the beginning that finds expression in myths, religion, dreams and literature. (Nandi 58) As archetypes have connection to literature, Maud Bodkin sets herself to explore the association of archetypes with poetry. In her book she stated that, “The special emotional significance possessed by certain poems ... a significance going beyond any definite meaning conveyed within or beneath his conscious response, of unconscious forces which he [Jung] terms “primordial images”, or archetypes” (Bodkin 1). “Primordial images” has deep connection with unconscious that has root in the initial stages of humanity. (Bodkin 1) Major primordial images are darkness, rebirth, cycle, search or quest, wanderer. Here image of darkness is a comparison between day and night. Rebirth archetype is a symbolic expression that is taking place in the mind and not in literal world. Questing hero image is positive travelers like Ulysses. Nandi thinks that, “It is through primordial images that universal archetypes are experienced, and more importantly, the

unconscious is revealed.” (58) Eliot has used “primordial image” or archetypal imagery in his poem. Maud Bodkin in the concluding paragraph of her book *Archetypal Patterns of Poetry* comments on *The Wasteland* that says, “The aspect of the poem which I wish to consider here is its character as exemplifying the pattern I have termed Rebirth.” After pointing out on one major primordial image she notes the accomplishments of the poem in Jung’s phrase and states, “a translation of the primordial image into the language of the present’, through its gathering into simultaneity of impression images form the remote past with incidents and phrases of the everyday present” (308). Thus, the connection between past and present in the literary art is archetypal criticism.

Chapter 4

Analysis

4.i Intertextuality: old tricks?

A few writers before Eliot took an attempt to make myth an art in their writing but undoubtedly Eliot proved himself as one of the best craftsmen of that art. *Ulysses* is a masterpiece by James Joyce. Eliot has clarified the concept of mythical method in his review of *Ulysses*. As a review of James Joyce's *Ulysses* in *The Dial* Eliot claims *Ulysses* to be “the most important expression which this present age has found,” a “book to which we are all indebted, and from which none of us can escape.” (177) Eliot praises Joyces’ “method,” as he calls it, as not merely “an amusing dodge, or scaffolding erected by the author for the purpose of disposing his realistic tale,” but instead “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” (177). In his essay, “*Ulysses, Order, and Myth*”, where he introduced his “mythic method” Eliot wrote,

“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 shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. It is a method already adumbrated by Mr. Yeats, and of the need for which I believe that Mr. Yeats to have been first contemporary to be conscious. Psychology (such as it is, and whether our reaction to it be comic or serious), ethnology, and *The Golden Bough* have concurred to make possible what was impossible

even a few years ago. Instead of a narrative method, we may now use the mythic method.

It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art.” (178)

The metaphoric use of science and chemical symbolism is applied in Eliot’s earlier essay, “Tradition and the Individual Talent”. In the essay, the role of the artist in the process of artistic creation is described as “the action which takes place when a bit of finely filiated platinum is introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide.” (40) He recognizes that artistic expression can be refined by adding various aspects from different subjects and timeline. Thus, the reader got to experience his adaptation of mythical methods in literature. In the same essay Eliot has frankly talked about Frazer's book *The Golden Bough* and Jessie L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* and that he acknowledges his debt to these books. He explicitly speaks of how much he is indebted to *From Ritual to Romance* saying, “Not only the title, but the plan and a good deal of the incidental symbolism of the poem were suggested by Miss Jessie L. Weston's book on the Grail legend: *From Ritual to Romance*”. (21) He further adds another major influence that is, *The Golden Bough*. In the book, there are several portions that deal with fertility rituals. For example,

“The ceremonies which they observed for this purpose were in substance a dramatic representation of the natural processes which they wished to facilitate; for it is a familiar tenet of magic that you can produce any desired effect by merely imitating it. And as they now explained the fluctuations of growth and decay, of reproduction and dissolution, by the marriage, the death, and the rebirth or revival of the gods, their religious or rather magical dramas turned in great measure on these themes. They set forth the fruitful union of the powers of fertility, the sad death of one at least of the divine partners, and his joyful resurrection.” (291)

These portions were significant for Eliot. Frazer talks about the vegetative powers of nature in his book that illustrate the continuity between the past and the present or in another sense between the primitive and the civilized. According to Bhagawati,

“When in 1921, Eliot saw a performance of Igor Stravinsky’s *Le Sacre du Printemps*, in which the ballet was based upon vegetation rites, he missed 'the sense of present' in everything except in the music. In his music there was a continuity between the primitive past and the civilized present which was later on reflection in “*The Wasteland*” too (That corpse you planted last year in your garden) and the barbaric cries of modern life are heard in the 'sound of horns and motors which shall bring /Sweeney to Mrs porter in the spring.” (337)

So, Eliot was primarily influenced by these write ups and ideas in making a connection between the primitive past with the modern present and using mythological methods to give the whole construct a revolutionary shape. Furthermore, “In *The Waste Land*, Eliot alludes to several other ancient and modern texts to contrast the relevance of the past in the present for moral replenishment and spiritual rejuvenation.” (Singh 61) Intertextuality is a common phenomena in modern literary works. James Joyce, James G. Frazer, Virginia Woolf, John Updike and other modern writers applied intertextuality in their literary works. My mention of “modern literary works” does not make the application of intertextuality uncommon in ancient texts as I have already discussed some ancient texts briefly in previous chapters. Virgil wrote *The Aeneid* to rival Homers’ *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. In ancient Greek culture, *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were used as an epic poem that educated people. It was considered something like *The Bible* in that era. Virgil wanted to write something in a Roman context. Undoubtedly, he was successful in this endeavor as *The Aeneid* is the national epic poem in Italy. Interestingly, Virgil’s work does not introduce

the readers to entirely a fresh story. He took characters, events from Homers' *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as reference. For instance, the famous opening line in original Latin starts, "Arma virumque cano" which can be translated as "I sing of the arms and the man". Here, "arms" means battle and warfare; which is a reference from the *Iliad*. If we go a little further and complete the line, "Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris" that translates as, "Of arms I sing and the man who first from the coasts of Troy" makes it clear that the event is direct reference from *Iliad* as *Iliad* vividly tells the stories of Trojan War or the War that took place in Troy. Now, this phenomenon of referring to another existing person or event in real life or literature was described as allusion or influence in previous times which is "old tricks" for intertextuality to some critics. An allusion within a literary work is, when the author alludes at something and expects the reader to understand the reference to an individual, place, event, piece of art or another literary text. Allusions in a literary text are purposeful but brief. During WWI in 1916, when the war instilled fear in the minds of the people, W.B. Yeats published "No Second Troy". This poem has a connection with the Irish struggle for independence. When he wrote this poem, the world was filled with chaos and a small part of this chaotic world was fighting for it's cultural freedom from British occupation. Regarding this, there were several calls for independence where his love interest Maud Gonne; the woman of unusual beauty, played an influential role. He criticizes her by indicating the violent side of Maud Gonne where she is willing to take arms for independence against the British. Yeats believed they could gain independence through legal means. Yeats was extremely critical about her involvement in nationalist politics and this shows the inevitable political difference with his beloved. We find him articulating the vision of civilization and destruction. Thus, he indicates an apocalyptic future in the concluding line in the poem by comparing Gonne with Helen of Troy who was

partially responsible for the great Trojan War. By making a rhetorical question, “Was there another Troy for her to burn?” he appeals that the purpose of civilization is not destruction and Ireland should not be on flames like Troy for irresponsible political decisions. Here, “Troy” directly alludes to a spot where a great war took place but the readers do not find the use of “Helen” in the writing. Helen is a symbol of a beautiful woman that hints to destruction to some extent. So, the allusions made in the line are distinguished by their brevity and indirectness. For this nature of passing signal, a reader can escape notice from an allusion if he is not educated about the topic or simply inattentive while reading. Eliot used allusions in *The Wasteland* extensively but if we are to talk about the echoing of one or more than one text into another, this text is a master example of the application of intertextuality. Eliot kept his work original even with the integration of fragments of existing literature through quotation. Eliot’s quotations in the poem are not in English, but in German, French, Italian and Latin. Considering the thematic aspect of every part of the poem, he respectively brought both living and dead languages. The first quote in *The Wasteland*, “Frisch weht der Wind Der Heimat zu Mein Irisch Kind, Wo weilest du?” in line 31-34 is from a German opera *Tristan und Isolde*; act I, verses 5-8. In the opera, this song is sung by a sailor who is missing his love. Eliot’s intention behind using the verse is to associate this with the hyacinth girl. The Hyacinth Girl’s words to the narrator in the poem serve a similar purpose to the sailor’s song. It is interesting to explore other quotations in line 42, 76, 202, 427, 428 in different languages. The power of quotations is fully explored in Eliot’s epigraphs. In *The Wasteland*, the quotation is from Petronius Arbiter’s *Satyricon* which is in Latin, but within it is included an Ancient Greek citation of the words of the Sybil of Cumae. The long epigraph in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” is a citation from Dante’s *Inferno* which is in Italian. In *Four Quartets* the two epigraphs are borrowed from *Heraclitus* and they

are in Ancient Greek. In “La figlia che piange” the epigraph is quoted from Virgil’s *The Aeneid* which is again from an ancient text and in Latin. The epigraphs generally serve as a preface to a literary work. The uses of references and the epigraph in *The Wasteland* are clearly not limited to allusions or any kind of influence. This can be classified inclusively under Kristeva’s term “intertextuality”. Be it influential or intertextuality, ancient writer Virgil aimed to capture the new era of Roman Empire and the great sacrifices the Romans had endured in *Aeneid*. Greek mythology has always been considered exemplary. People did not bring new legends and took plots from the Greeks because their art was more vivid and colorful. Roman culture was less prosperous, so many points were borrowed from Hellenic tradition. Although Roman mythology was considered poor, the number of gods was the same as that of the Greeks. Virgil wanted to give the Roman a fresh sense of their origins, their past and their potential by connecting the founding of Rome to the mythological stories that his audience knew so well. His aim was to link his hero Aeneas to the new emperor Augustus. Similarly, it can be said that, Eliot by his identical references of characters to Petronius Arbiter’s *Satyricon*, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Homer’s epics, Virgil’s *Aeneid* wanted to convey the message of spiritual death of modern society and the necessity to rebuilt Western civilization. “With these and other intertextual allusions” modernist writer Eliot “makes a display of dreadful degradation in contemporary America by juxtaposing the divine past with the degenerate present.” (Singh 62) Many critics studied the reasons behind Eliot’s use of vast reference and shared their own perspectives. I think Wilson subtly described his view on this topic that compliments my paper. Wilson in an article claimed that Eliot's symbolism was derived from Jessie L. Weston's book, *From Ritual to Romance*. He contends that Eliot's mind “finds itself looking out upon the present with the prouder eyes of the past and

which loves to make its oracles as deep as the experience of the race itself by piling up stratum upon stratum of reference, as the Italian painters used to paint over one another”(140).

4.2 Blending myth into reality

As previously discussed, myths were perceived as real and passed down from generation to generation. It may be argued that it is one of the oldest forms of oral folklore. With time the “mythology” theme became the great interest to the writers of the “golden age”. The ancient Greek and Roman mythology is striking in its originality. Many people still wonder, how people could have imagined the universe so efficiently - or perhaps it was! For my paper, I have focused on ancient Greek and Roman mythology as the characters selected from the poem have their roots in those mythologies. As I move from myth to archetype there are some motifs and images that are recurring in different mythologies and those examples serving the same meaning to the people of different time and place. These archetypes and myths work as a tool to bring order in literature. Although slightly distinct in nature, these serve as a literary device in the use of symbol, metaphor, imagery etc. The purpose behind the use of myths in literature is people must know their past in order to be aware of the destination. Otherwise, the significance of the future also decreases.

4.i.a Monotonous redundancy leading to death wish

In ancient Rome a legend has it that, an unknown strange old woman suddenly appeared in the final King of Rome, Tarquinius’ superbus bearing nine scrolls of prophecies by the God. She offered to sell them to the king but the price was exorbitant. The scrolls had prophecies about Rome but the king laughed with contempt after hearing the outrageous charge. Instead of negotiating, the woman set a fire in front of the king and burnt three of the total books. She

offered the remaining six for the same price but the king did not change his mind. The woman played hardball and again burnt the books leaving just three about the future of Rome; yet offering the same price. Only then, Tarquinius gave in and decided to purchase the books. After that, the woman disappeared as unexpectedly as she arrived. Later, she was identified as the prophetess Sibyl; a woman cursed with unnaturally long life with the ability to see the future. Sibyl was the beloved of God Apollo who once offered her to make love with him and he will grant any wish of her in return. Scooping up a handful of sand, she asked Apollo to grant her as many years as the grains of sand in her hand. As soon as Apollo granted her wish, Sibyl turned him down. Sibyl carelessly forgot to ask for eternal youth while making the wish. So, as she grew older, she shrank so small with age that she could fit into a bottle and only wish for death. Whether Sibyl was more than a cultural phenomenon in ancient Rome or not, her prophetic tone had a rhetorical significance as she used to be presented as a patroness of oracles at that time. Whenever events threatened the survival of Rome, the sibylline books were always consulted. People had faith in those prophecies as they followed them even if it was about to abandon their cultural taboos. Ironically, this estimable figure wanted the end of her life as her only wish. "I want to die" – a famous line from the stories of Sibyl, somehow depicts the psyche of the modern generation. Brooks points out that *The Wasteland* is, "built on a major contrast between two kinds of life and two kinds of death. Life devoid of meaning is death; sacrifice, even the sacrificial death, may be life-giving, an awakening to life. The poem occupies itself to a great extent with this paradox." (8) So, there is life and the true meaning of that life is in sacrifices. If there are no sacrifices there is no feel of achievements. Eliot applies the idea of poet and poetry that he developed in his essay, "Tradition and Individual Talent". A writer connects different elements in his writings. He has a developed idea about the connection of past to the present. He

applies those ideas in his writing. In that process the writer stays unchanged. The maturity of writing does not come when the writer has to say more but it is in the ability to understand the individuality in own self, the ability of connecting the history or tradition to the present context. This individuality makes oneself distinct from others. Sybil is borrowed from myth or past but her story connects to the present that this world is meaningless without death no matter how tough it is. Everything is connected and certain changes in this connection can bring negative consequences. Throughout the whole poem, “Eliot shows the rampant sexual, spiritual, and cultural sterility in the modern world through images picked up from the everyday urban life” (Singh 61) Some words and phrases from the poem, “[a] heap of broken images” (63), “broken fingernails” (74), “tumbled graves” (78), “decayed hole” (78) “mud cracked houses” (76) invokes Sibyl’s cry with a view of brokenness and spiritual death in modern world. [Sibyl] “She represents the death-wish of the twentieth century people. Lacking faith, they have no hope for resurrection and their life on this earth is full of frustration, anguish, uncertainty and anxiety to survive.” (Farzana 60) We cannot find direct use of the title, “Sibyl” in the poem as Madame Sosostris is the equivalent as Sibyl in the poem. “the wisest woman in Europe” (64) is diseased in Eliot’s world as she seems to lack peace of mind. The “death-wish” can be considered as an archetype as it seems to be a recurring image in every time period. The monotonous redundancy of society screams out loud for death as it seems to be an easier solution than to be doomed in a wasteland.

4.ii.b. Spiritual thirst in barrenness

In the epigraph of *The Wasteland*, the desire for death that Sibyl express, echoes throughout the whole poem. In line 43, Madame Sosostris foretold the future referencing death. Now, the underlying plot of the poem is based on the myth of Fisher King as Fisher King is an archetype

for healing quests. The root of the character Fisher King is found in the Arthurian myths from the Middle Age. The legend tells, the Fisher King is wounded and cannot be healed. His kingdom reflecting the interstate of the king or the ruling principle is in the dire straits as well nothing can grow and thrive. This is how we feel when we are wounded. The people of the kingdom are enchanted. There are many versions of the story about Fisher King's wound. Once, Fisher King was wandering around the forest with his hunting party and he became separated from the group and ended up hungry and alone in the forest. He smells some salmon roasting on an open fire and he reaches for it and burns his mouth. This is what happens to someone when they try to assimilate some knowledge that is too powerful for them that they become burned for life and never recover. In many ways, this happens mostly in adolescence. Another version says, the wound of Fisher King made him impotent under the curse arising from the wanton violation of the sanctity of sex and surrender to lust and his lack of potency made his kingdom drought-laden. Very little is left for him to do but fish in a river near his castle. Only a pure knight can save him from his sufferings. Perceval in search of Holy Grail heals the Fisher King. Helen Gardner points out that the poem achieves its unity "by constant references to the underlying myth, and to related myths of death and re-birth". (87) In *The Wasteland*, the Holy Grail is medieval legend associated with the adventure of the King with his 12 disciples of the round table. In the poem, Fisher King is the man who is looking at the sea that is barren and futile, represents water when he was injured and it shows the symbol as water being drained out and turns into a wasteland. He is the man with the desire to be saved from the horrible reality full of suffering. He represents the humanity wanting to be saved. Milton Miller observes that "one of the most inclusive of the narrative metaphors of the poem is that of the active quest, the Grail quest, which gives the poem its name, shape, and movement". (442) In *The Wasteland*, Eliot has shown a morally barren

society. The uses of images and phrases, “dry stone” (63), “empty bottles, sandwich papers, silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends” (70), “dull canal” (70), “dry bones” (78), and “dry and sterile thunder” (76) shows the aridness in a desolate land. “*The Wasteland* offers a meditation on death and a reflection on that which was lost. The world was slowly withering away like the cursed kingdom of the Fisher King.” (Haas 31) Fisher King Legend touches on some significant issues that modern man has lost contact with and needs to regain. One of the major primordial images used in *The Wasteland* is rebirth which by nature connects to the past. To establish the image, Eliot has brought several mythical characters where the central myth is death-rebirth-archetype. Nandi says, “For the purposes of coherence and comprehensiveness, Eliot conflates the impotent Fisher King's journey towards a restoration of potency with the Knight's quest for the Holy Grail and with a search for spiritual recovery through the death-rebirth archetype.” (60) In the legend, the King's kingdom is barren but there is still hope to regain fertility. Similarly, Eliot's wasteland gives the reader an impression of bleak emptiness in society and the questing knight having some spiritual thirst recurs in several scenes throughout the whole poem. In “The Fire Sermon” part the pronoun “I”, referring to Fisher King who “was fishing in the dull canal” (189) suggests the Christian symbolism of “fishing” for spiritual restoration. After appearing in line 197-202, 207-214, 257-265, 378, 424-426, the fishing theme finally suggests a happy ending. “black clouds Gathered far distant” (396-397), “moment's surrender” (403) suggests that the Fisher King might have healed or there is hope. The Fisher King mirrors modern society in the poem. The striking enigma of the poem is, the epigraph or the very beginning of the poem starts with a death wish and ends with “shantih shantih shantih” (433). “Shantih” is uttered in Sanskrit; a reference from Hindu Upanishad that gives peace to all understanding.

4.iii.c. Clairvoyant as a unifying device

Tiresias has an imperfect unification in his character that has the ability to unify *The Wasteland* perfectly from the modern point of view. This blind seer is a very important character in mythology appearing in many tragedies. There are many different stories surrounding the clairvoyant figure's gender bending and gift of prophecy. Among them the most famous one is, one day the young Tiresias saw two copulating serpents on mount Cyllene in the Peloponnese. In order to break them, he struck them with his staff and wounded the female serpent. Instantly, he was transformed into a woman. After some seven years later when he came upon the same two snakes doing the same as before, he thought if striking the snakes once can turn me into opposite sex, then I shall strike them again to return to my previous form. So, he trampled on the serpent and regained his masculinity. This gender switching act became famous among the Gods and Goddesses. Tiresias was in a unique position, who have experienced sex as both gender. Once, Hera and Zeus had a disagreement on between man and women, who enjoyed sex more and Hera invited Tiresias to intervene in the argument as Tiresias was the ideal adjudicator for this particular problem. However, Hera was not pleased by Tiresias' answer. In anger, she instantly struck Tiresias blind for his impiety. Zeus could do nothing to reverse what another God has done. So, in compensation, Tiresias got the gift of foresight from Zeus. Tiresias' sex-change was embellished in Hellenistic and Roman times and now modern critics have new perspective where he is seen as a "modernist maypole". "I propose the roles of Tiresias should be explored as if he is the top of a modernist maypole—a maypole with ribbons, some torn and some missing, attempting to extend to each of the sections of the poem." (Sergi 10) A maypole was originally a living tree. The tree was adorned by floral garlands and ribbons. According to some people the tree represented masculine energy and the ornaments feminine energy. A traditional maypole

consists of a fixed tall wooden pole that has ribbon around it, extending from top to down. “In *The Waste Land*, Tiresias is the stationary maypole; however, some of the ribbons connecting him to the other characters in the poem are either torn or missing. In true modernist fashion, the maypole, Tiresias, unifies the work by suggesting what it might have been.” (Sergi 1) The depiction of Tiresias is different in *The Wasteland* than in myths as he is both male and female at a time. Calder considers Tiresias, “a representative of both sexes; a voice of Buddha who preaches against lust and Eliot echoes St Augustine's rejection of sensual temptation” (57) He was blind but he has gift of prophecy and immortality. He actually achieved that higher vision through his blindness. “I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives, Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see” (217-18) The theme of gender dualism is very strong in the poem as Eliot sees Tiresias as the meeting of both sexes. There is no evidence in mythology where Tiresias is seen acted as a homosexual. From another perspective, neither heterosexuality nor homosexuality makes Tiresias the representative of both sexes at the same time. Thus, the mingling of two sexes exists in him and he knows the mind of both. For this reason, Tiresias was perhaps considered the wisest and most knowledgeable seer in myth. There are other prophets in the poem as well as in myths but Tiresias is the archetype for soothsayer for his knowledge. “Tiresias is the observer, the method of surveillance, but he is also a representation of the decaying society in which the gendered identities of the poem begin to meld together.” (Sergi 16) Tiresias points at the gender identity in modern society. Society has some culturally acceptable norms like gender identity; which gets pounded in the poem by a wise person to some extent. Tiresias unifies the scenes in the poem. “Except a common connection in Tiresias, there is no continuity or coherence among the various sections and stanzas in the entire poem. It is a heap of fragments brought together by the narrator in an attempt to create order out of chaos.” (Singh 62)

To hold the prophetic tone, to break the gender norms, to bring the gender dualism, to unify the whole poem by acting as a maypole in *The Wasteland*, no one could serve as better as Tiresias.

Conclusion

Myths are sacred tales that explain the historical and cultural experiences to people. Myths are as relevant to us today as they were to the ancients. Myths serve as a compass to each generation as it has the ability to answer timeless questions. As the young generation accepts the adult responsibilities, the hero's quest is a model for them to follow. The myths of ancient age give people hope that there are great leaders from whom they can learn and the heroic morals can improve their lives. This is why ancient Greek epics are still studied in schools and institutions of higher learning in Western culture, and the characters in them are still borrowed by authors to create stories and novels. I have discussed those myths in my paper but the Indian subcontinent has also a glorious history of mythology that are still studied and used to refer religious aspects. In this part of the world ancient myths were used to teach people too, especially the truths – truths about universe, life and afterlife. Truth is not just spiritual consciousness. It also lays in the physicality and hard emotions. In fact, the purification of all things, and the basis of spirituality, is the universal benevolence, the benevolence of charity and non-violence – which are present in the Puranas. Thus, a holistic analysis of all the Puranic literature reveals that they contain a variety of valuable and important information from the prehistoric period of India and the contemporary Puranic historical period. The importance of Puranic literature is also immense in knowing the history of how the Indian Hindu nation has worked for self-establishment through the ages, how it has coped with the various ups and downs of life and how the emergence of a new national entity has come about through these ups and downs. In the Puranas we first find descriptions of various idols, temples, shrines, vows etc. We find the creation of the temple as a public meeting place of this era. Instead of Vedic deities like Agni, Indra, Varuna etc., new deities like Brahma-Vishnu-Maheshwar, Radha-Krishna, Shiva-Durga etc. are seen to be created

in Puranas. Ancient myths are often of interest to sculptors throughout the whole world, because the subject of inspiration is man. The creators did not hesitate to portray the curve of a beautiful body that is not covered by clothing. By now it is clear that writer uses myths in writing to make it more artistic. But one can certainly think that writers can make imaginary characters. With those characters they can express what they think, what they feel. They can express love, hatred. They can talk about birth, death and rebirth and connect them with the help of those imaginary characters. Then what is the need of taking mythological characters? In my paper, I tried to find this answer. Everything that a writer writes, relates to their personal emotions to some extent and as a writer and artist they always want to express those emotions in an artistic way. They tend to use some gathered elements to make a fit medium for the emotion they want to express. In order to gather those elements they tend to invent or discover stories and sometimes a set of incidents or situation, sometimes character. In this way they make their writing more artistic maybe because it is the best way of expressing. Sometimes, they find well known existing characters and event that expresses their emotion in a better way. This is the reason of Eliot using mythical method in his writing.

The people of modern age have immersed themselves in mechanical life. They are the best at keeping themselves submerged in the ocean of works; the works from which they are likely to get the expected results. In order to achieve that, modern people usually want proof for all things. Therefore, they avoid things that do not have logics. They want to avoid the beautiful imaginary world in their mind because of their work pressure. As soon as they get some free time, they engage themselves in the world of entertainment. As the people of modern age have integrated themselves into the life of science, the concept of parallel universe, technology, space, aliens, heroes with supernatural powers, time travel have become the dominative factors in their

fictional world. How far are mythological stories from fictions? Dorothy Van Ghent explains the meaning and significance of myth relating it to new generation,

“Myth is a dramatic vision of life, and we never cease making myths, accepting myths, believing in myths; even in our own positivistic age, we see life dramatically through the myths offered us by Hollywood, by the commercial advertisements, by the detective story, by local politics, by international diplomacy, or by physicists.” (52)

We often see the urge of certain people to travel back to the past in modern literature and cinemas. Sometimes the past is unknown and they want to explore, sometimes the past is known; and because it was simply better, they want exemption from brutal present, sometimes there are some errors in the past that needs to be corrected. Now, this gives us the idea that in order to project the future properly, information related to past is important. Major mistakes of the past must be ignored in the future. Also, history repeats itself. That’s why past stories and myths are important. People who do not know what a myth is, they can enlighten themselves by the literary minds who tells past stories using interesting syntactic units in their speech. Geniuses like T.S.Eliot prove that literature and mythology can coexist and for their union, great works are born.

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