

A historical black and white photograph showing a massive crowd of soldiers in uniform marching down a wide city street. The soldiers are wearing hats and carrying rifles. In the center of the crowd, a banner is visible with the text "Halt the War". The street is lined with multi-story buildings, and the perspective is looking down the length of the street.

# WW1 Aftermath

- Political consequences
- Social consequences
- Psychological consequences



# Psychological consequences

- Decay of bourgeois values (materialism, utilitarianism, respectability.....)
- Lack of new values
- Sense of loss
- Lack of certainties
- Hopelessness
- No future
- Fear







# THE WASTE LAND

T.S.Eliot 1922

# Fragmentation

- Eliot wanted his poetry to express the fragile psychological state of humanity in the twentieth century
- Fragmentation in poetry was a way to demonstrate the chaotic state of modern existence
- Humanity's psyche had been shattered by World War 1 and the collapse of the British Empire
- Collaging bits and pieces of dialogues , images, foreign words.....in a poetic work is Eliot's way to represent humanity's damaged psyche
- Fragments of western cultural heritage



# Mythic and Religious Ritual

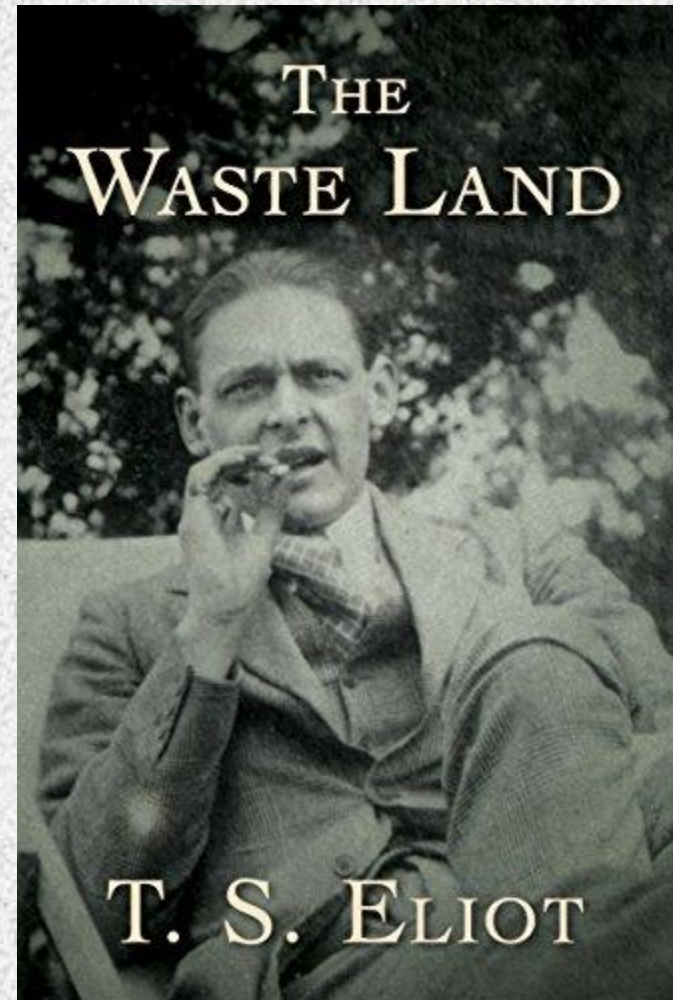
- Religious symbols and myths played a crucial role in the Waste Land.
- The past seen as a whole (fertile, reassuring)
- The present seen as fragmented (bare, frightful)
- Traditional myths lose their connotation in the present
- Frazer «The Golden Bough»
- Weston «From Ritual to Romance»

# Structure of the Poem

- Epigraph

Five Sections:

- The Burial of the Dead
- A Game of Chess
- The Fire Sermon
- Death by Water
- What the Thunder said



# The Epigraph

- **"Nam Sybillam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum pueri illi dicerent: Στβμλλτί Θέλεις; respondebat illa: ἀποθνεῖν Θελω.»**
- "With my own eyes I saw the Sybil of Cumae hanging in a bottle; and when the boys said to her: Sybil, what do you want?" she replied: "I want to die."
- From Satyricon. Petronius.





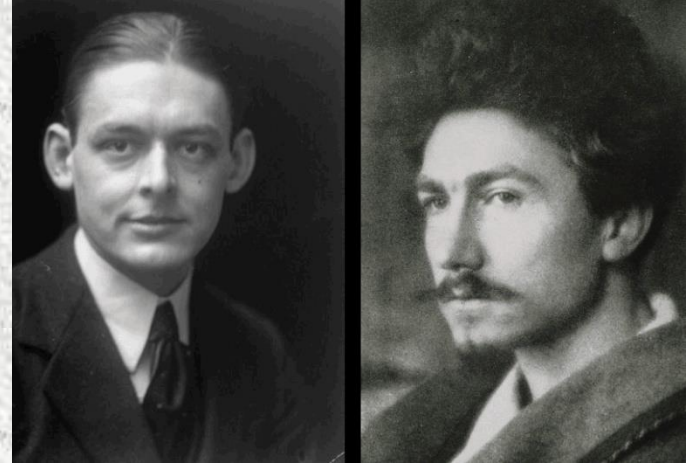
# The Sibyl of Cumae



- Prophetess in service to Apollo
- Apollo wants to seduce her and as a gift he wants to grant her one wish
- The Sibyl at first accepts:she wants Apollo to make her immortal
- When she changes her mind , Apollo grants her wish anyhow.
- She will be immortal, but she'll also grow older and older.
- Time consumes her body, till she becomes so small to be confined in a vial and exposed to public derision, just like Trimalchion in the epigraph.



# Ezra Pound



- For Ezra Pound  
«il miglior fabbro»
- Praise given by Dante to Arnaut Daniel (Purgatory), for being a better wordsmith than he (Dante)
- He helped Eliot edit the drafts of *The Waste Land*, and is at least partially responsible for its current formatting.
- He actually worked as the blacksmith of his poem erasing entire passages of even pages, thus transforming the original whole into «a heap of broken images»

were not to find it  
enough as were  
to want

The typist home at teatime, who begins  
~~to clear~~ away her ~~(broken)~~ breakfast, lights  
Her stove, and lays out squalid food in time;  
Prepares the room and sets the room to rights.

Out of the window perilously spread  
Her drying combinations meet the sun's last rays,  
And on the divan ~~(piles)~~, (at night her bed),  
Are stockings, dirty camisoles, and stays.

A bright kimono wraps her as she ~~scraps~~  
In nervous terror on the window seat;  
A touch of art is given by the false  
Japanese print, purchased in Oxford Street.

I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs,  
Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest,  
Knowing the number of these crawling bugs,  
I too awaited the expected guest.

A youth of ~~twenty~~, spotted about the face,  
One of those simple loiterers whom we say  
We may have seen in any public place  
At almost any hour of night or day.

Pride has not fired him with ambitious rage,  
His hair is thick with grease, and thick with scurf,  
~~perhaps~~ his inclinations touch the stage -  
Not sharp enough to associate with the turf.

He, the young man carlamouler, ~~will stare~~  
~~boldly~~ about, in "London's one cafe",  
And he will tell her, ~~with casual air~~,  
Grandly "I have been with Nevinsen today".

Perhaps a cheap house agent's clerk, who flits  
Daily, from flat to flat, with one bold stare;  
One of the low on whom assurance sits  
As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.

He munches with the same peristent stare,  
He knows his way with women (and that's that!)  
Impertinently tilting back his chair  
And dropping cigarette ash on the mat.

The time is now propitious, as he guesses,  
The meal is ended, she is bored and tired;  
Endeavours to engage her in caresses,  
Which still are unrequited, if undesired.

inventions  
not warranted  
by any real  
experience  
with it  
Too easy

Personal

Perhaps  
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# April is the cruellest month...?

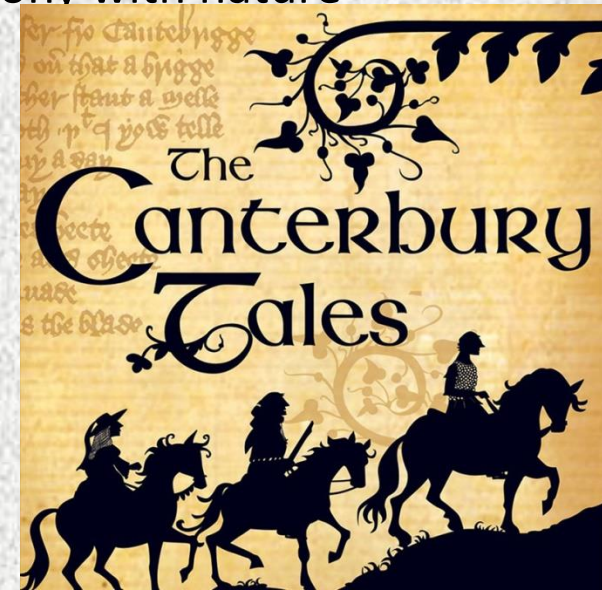
When April with his *showers sweet* with fruit  
The *drought of March has pierced unto the root*  
And *bathed* each vein with *liquor* that has *power*  
To *generate* therein and sire the *flower*;  
When Zephyr also has, with his *sweet* breath,  
*Quickened* again, *in every holt and heath*,  
*The tender shoots and buds*, and the young sun  
Into the Ram one half his course has run,  
And many little birds make melody  
That sleep through all the night with open eye  
(So Nature pricks them on to ramp and rage)-  
*Then do folk long to go on pilgrimage*, (Chaucer .  
The Canterbury Tales)

The spring showers are :

- Sweet
- Powerful
- Generate life
- Boost natural rebirth

Men:

- seek for spiritual rebirth
- are in harmony with nature



# The Burial of the Dead

(Anglican rite/resurrection liturgy)

April is the *cruellest* month,  
*breeding*  
Lilacs out of the *dead land*, mixing  
Memory and desire, *stirring*  
*Dull roots* with *spring rain*.  
Winter kept us warm, covering  
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding  
A little life with *dried tubers*.

,

The spring showers are:

- Painful
- A call to life
- Powerless
- Ineffective

Men are:

- Dull roots
- Deaf to the call to life



# The Objective Correlative

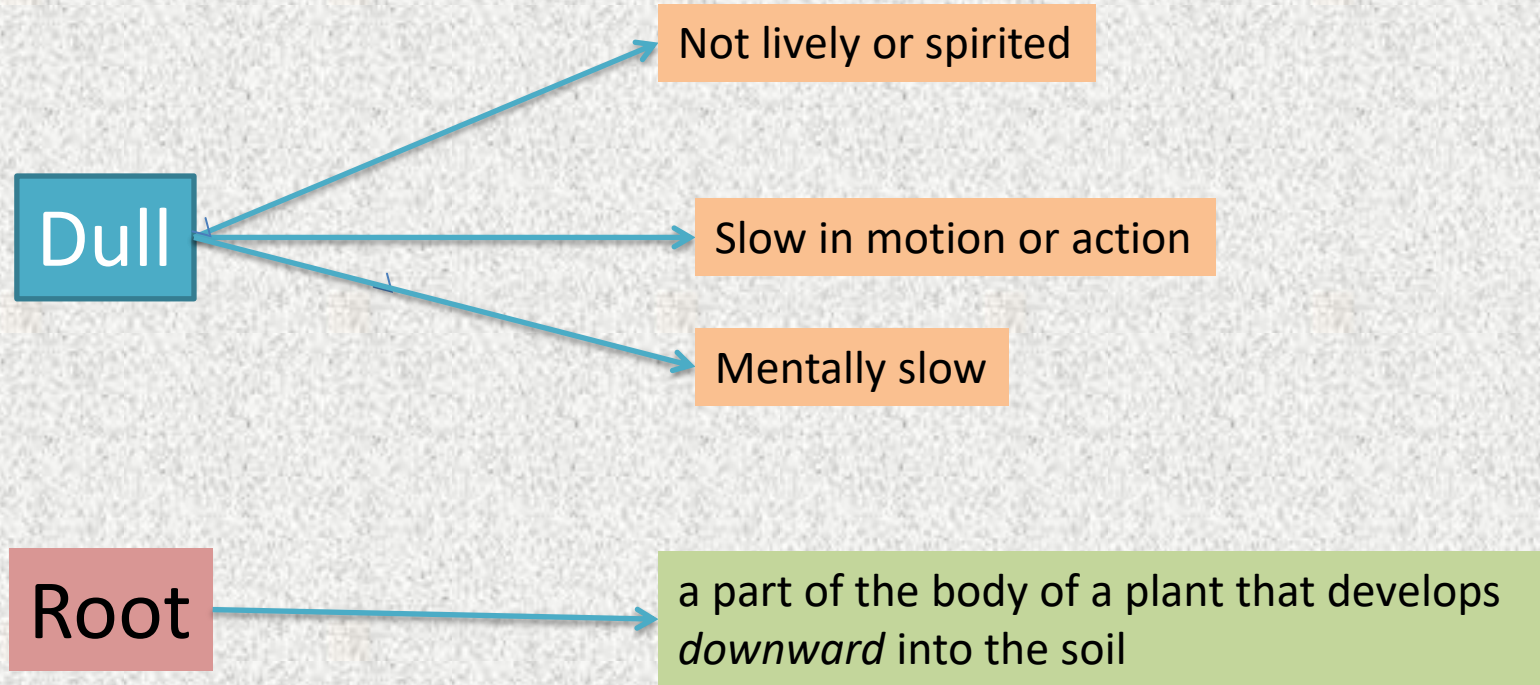
- Term coined by the American painter Washington Allston
- Correlates the state of mind of the poet to a series of tangible well-define objects
- Feelings are no longer described but become real.
- «Ossi di Seppia»(Montale, 1925) example of objective correlative.

# Metaphor or Objective Correlative?

- **Metaphor**: figure of speech that describes an object or action in a way that isn't literally true, but helps explain an idea or make a comparison. Hence: words, words, words..
- Ex: "He is a walking encyclopedia" = cultured, cultivated..
- **Objective correlative**: feelings and state of minds are correlated to tangible objects . Hence: things.
- Ex: Post war men were «dull roots».



# Being a «**dull root**»



Hence :

*Modern men refuse the call to life represented by Spring rain and like roots they prefer to develop downwards into the soil, rather than sprouting.*

# Hamlet

- Etymology ➡ Amloði ➡ dim-witted
- His father's ghost calls him to revenge his murder.
- After a moment of rage, he ponders and feels unfit:

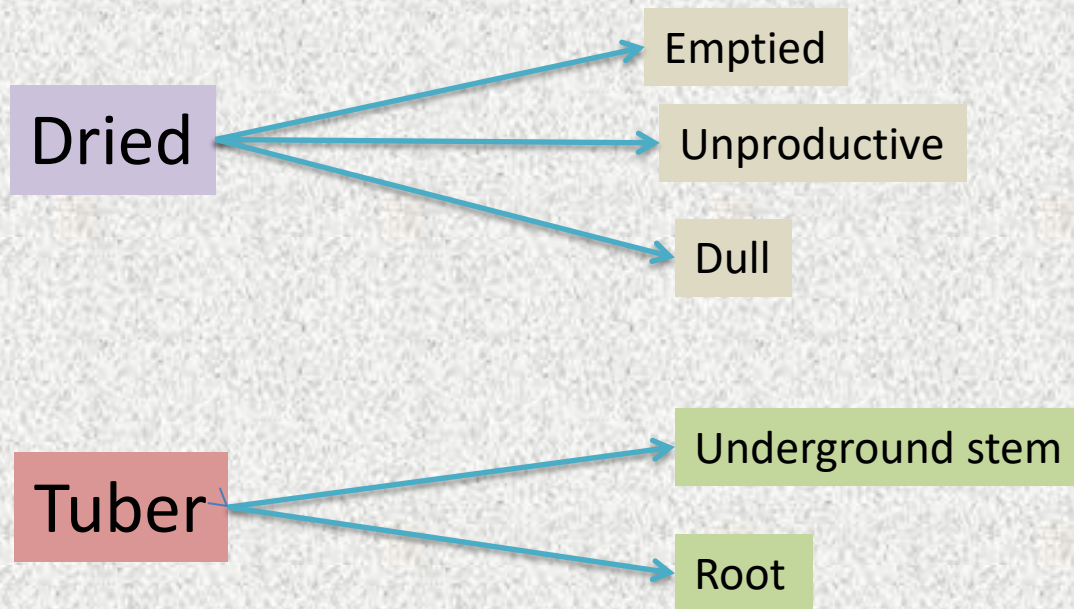
*«The time is out of joint,  
oh cursed spite that I was ever born  
to set it right»*

- Pretends to be mad to delay action.
- Acts only when it is inevitable and eventually dies in a final duel planned by the villain Claudius.





# New values as«Dried Tubers»



Hence

*The war has emptied men of values, certainties and hopes. The consequent depressive state also due to the impossibility of filling that void, makes life unbearable.*

## The Burial of the Dead

*April* is the *cruellest* month,  
*breeding*

*Lilacs* out of the *dead land*, mixing

Memory and desire, *stirring*

*Dull roots* with *spring rain*.

Winter kept us warm, covering

Earth in forgetful snow, feeding

A little life with *dried tubers*.

*The spring showers are:*

- *Painful*
- *A call to life*
- *Powerless*
- *Ineffective*

*Men are:*

- *Dull roots*
- *Deaf to the call to life*

*Lines 2-8, Usually, Easter Sunday, which commemorates Christ's resurrection, falls in April. But Eliot ironically comments here that April is the "cruellest month" as the stirring of natural life and the spiritual resurrection symbolized in Easter fill humans today not with hope but fear and apprehension, if not despair*

*Line 2, "Breeding lilacs...": According to traditional vegetation myths, Lilacs symbolized fertility. This flowers has a poetic associations with death - the lilac for its purple color of mourning and exquisite beauty were perhaps celebrated by Whitman in his elegy for Lincoln "When Lilacs last in the Doovyard Bloom'ed."*





# Tiresias

« The old man with wrinkled dugs »



- Main speaking voice of the Waste Land
- According to myths, punished by the goddess Hera for having killed a female snake while copulating and turned into a woman.
- Tiresias becomes the priestess of Hera , marries and has children.
- After 7 years when Tiresias sees again two snakes while copulating, she/he refrains from doing anything, therefore he/she is allowed to regain his masculinity
- Tiresias supports Zeus in a family dispute with Hera about who had more sexual pleasure:a man or a woman. Having experienced both genders,he was the most qualified on the subject and says women.
- Having lost the dispute, Hera punishes Tiresias and strikes him blind.
- Zeus can do nothing to stop or reverse her wife's curse, as Greek gods cannot change what others have decided, so he gives him the power to predict the future and the lifespan of seven lives as recompense.

# Why Tiresias?

- Having been both man and woman makes him a unifying figure in The Waste Land.
- Tiresias links the ancient and modern worlds and giving unity to that “heap of broken images” which is the present state of things.
- In the desolation and despair of The Waste Land, he reactivates his ancient role – that of a prophet.
- In this mythological context, Eliot seems to indicate that the state of the waste land will not always be perpetual as long as Tiresias directs us.





## Countess Marie

«mixing memories and desires»

Summer surprised **us**, coming over the  
Starnbergersee

With a shower of rain; **we** stopped in the  
colonnade,

And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,

And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.

Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen,  
echt deutsch.

And when we were children, staying at the  
arch-duke's,

My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,

And I was frightened. He said, Marie,

Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.

In the mountains, there you feel free.

I read, much of the night, and go south in the  
winter.

- There is a dramatic change of tone and tempo here.
- Abrupt transition from the slow pace and solemn mood of the opening lines, which Tiresias - the narrator seems to intone as a sort of interior monologue or soliloquy.
- In the 11 lines, the speaker seems to have changed and we, apparently, hear the narration of countess Marie Larisch about her childhood memories and present life.
- This passage of her reminiscences throws light upon her early emotional experiences, her wanderings through Europe as a political refugee from her native Lithuania and her own loss of identity resulting from her life as an ex - royal exile.
- This section creates a picture of an emotional waste land in the lives of aristocratic women like countess Marie who suffered great physical hardships and psychological dislocations as a result of the political turmoil in Europe immediately before during and soon after World War I.