



**Universiteit Utrecht**

**Meaning in a Handful of Dust:  
Meaningful Narrative in The Waste Land**

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### Abstract

With his famed poem *The Waste Land*, Thomas Stears Eliot wrote an example of a new method of creating art, as he observed the novel to be an outdated form of description which no longer did justice to society. The plethora of researchers the poem has inspired seem to agree on the plotless form of the text. By examining the method employed in combination with Eliot's opinions regarding literary criticism and modern writing it is argued that there is a form of narrative at work in *The Waste Land*, which might have been overlooked because of a focus on plot in most critics. The interpretative basis of the poem and the use of an objective correlative by the author will be explained in order to allow for a wider scope of the meaning of narrative which Eliot argued for, creating a platform for sensation instead of moral message to come from a text interwoven with mythology. The unchronological result for which T. S. Eliot argues is then tested in a text created for the purpose of examining the strategy distilled from *The Waste Land*. All prerogatives regarding this creation are observed, leaving the interpretation to the reader, as is integral to a poem created by use of the mythical method.

### Introduction

The November issue of *The Dial*, an American literary magazine, opened its reviews section with a lyrical review of James Joyce's recently published *Ulysses*. Thomas Stearns Eliot used the few pages given to him by the Chicagoan monthly to delve into the unique form of Joyce's novel, hailing the author for heralding a new form of writing which manipulated "a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity" (481). Having just finished writing *The Waste Land*, a great similarity between the novel form of combining the past and the present in the work of Joyce and within Eliot's own use of the mythical method, as he himself named the *modus operandi*, could be observed. Eliot did not at all believe the parallel use of the *Odyssey* in *Ulysses* to be the work of a "prophet of chaos" or a "flood of Dadaism", but rather believed the method to have "the importance of a scientific discovery" (482-483). According to Manjola Nasi, professor at the University of Tirana, the intermingling of the old and the new was "an act of alchemy" when employing the mythic method, which organizes the individual elements of a work of fiction without restraining them by use of the rigid structures of a narrative technique" (2).

In *The Waste Land*, the first few lines directly touch upon the seasons, which bring forth a cycle of growth and decay. These opening phrases are accompanied by a title belonging to an Anglican burial, in which the cyclical alternation between death and resurrection occupies a key position. Throughout the poem a combination of the natural and the religious can be seen, in which the latter influences the former in a form of tangible foreboding. According to Lindsay Sarin's dissertation from Eastern Michigan University, Eliot studied different religions throughout his life and although he saw religion as "one key to solving the problems of modernity", its application within the poem seems to stretch beyond a collective path towards a solution of any kind (3). It must be noted beforehand that when narration is mentioned, the simply act of storytelling by the author is referred to. However, the term narrative will henceforth only be used in the third form as mentioned in the Oxford English Dictionary: "a representation of a particular situation or process in such a way as to reflect or conform to an overarching set of aims or values" (Murray). In *The Waste Land*, the reader is offered a

narration which constantly shifts between optics derived from Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. As we move from lens to lens the mythical elements of these religions intertwine and show themselves to be similar, allowing the author to connect the five loose parts using multiple threads. He who may not survive the cycle of nature, or so the reader might fear at first, is the inhabitant of the waste land, to whom the religious and natural circularities are “frightening ... and scandalous” (Spurr 27). The secular mind, “which we are all compelled to some extent to share” uses religion as a solution, so that the individual believes he or she can become part of a larger narrative, actively saving him- or herself from the barren land by stepping outside the process of nature (27).

Scott Freer acknowledges the “sense of hope experienced through seasonal expectations” within the poem (2). However, this sense of hope is only allowed to function as a veil by the author, as we will see it covering the actual non-linearity of the poem. By use of the mythical method this traditional seasonal order is able to disrupt the status quo of the described wasteland because of its continuity throughout various cultures; a first glimpse at the various functions of the employed method, all of which will be elaborated further on. Denis Donoghue believes Eliot to have been convinced that “the futility and anarchy of contemporary history could be redeemed ... by showing (these events) in the critical light of a myth, a coordinate story already significantly shaped. Such a myth would redeem the penury of mere events” (208). As seen in the example given here, multiple myths are woven through *The Waste Land* without leaving actual traces of their plot, as most scholars agree the poem to be a coherent but plotless amalgamation of poetic parts: “Eliot and Joyce (liberated) themselves from traditional concepts of plot and structure” (Brooker and Bentley 28). An argument regarding narration, with its aforementioned definition, instead of plot will be constructed, as the latter refers to a linear sequence not employed by T. S. Eliot.

By examining the origins of the mythical method and the shape in which Eliot has bend this modus operandi, a light will be shed upon the apparent unintentional form of *The Waste Land*. Although we agree on the premise of the poem’s plotless form, in which the present is understood only after examining the past, it will be argued that there is an underlying narrative to be found in Eliot’s work. A structural analysis of the mythical method and the narration

within *The Waste Land*, combined with Eliot's ideas on chronology and mythology, will be conducted. Furthermore, a reflection on the conclusion drawn regarding narrative will be written with the help of a written piece of our own. Eliot's prerogatives regarding the writing of poetry such as *The Waste Land*, which will be explored throughout the essay, will be applied in order to gain a clear view on the conclusion drawn as previously mentioned.

## Chapter 1

Eliot lauded James Joyce for introducing a way of writing which had never been seen before, as it offered an alternative to what Eliot called the "narrative method", a method he believed to be unfit for the modern writer who wishes to create art (3-5). Here the American author stated, and quite clearly so, that the intention of a writer who wanted to create art would never be synonymous with an historically accurate tale. Instead, the history embedded in each mythical poem or story would mingle with the creativity of the writer in order to create this bond between past and present Eliot so admired in Joyce's work. Here we see the first basis for a narrative unchained from a single historic thread, one which is formed by the re-interpretation of the myth at hand by an author meaning to unveil a link between the two halves of the parallel formed by past and present. It is, of course, up to the reader to distill this meaningful connection from the work of art, but this is far from a novelty both in the functioning of an artistic creation and, more significantly, a myth. The Irish Chair of Letters at York University, Denis Donoghue, supposes in his work, *Yeats, Eliot, and the Mythical Method*, that a myth is a story entwined with a narrative, often with a functionalist undertone, which the reader of said myth might eventually observe as a moral obligation: "I take it that a myth is a story told for the benefit of the community to which it is addressed: it tells the members of that community how to live, what to do, which forces they should dread" (208). Eliot's plethora of mythologies might thus befuddle the reader, as multiple communities are spoken to in this sense. Donoghue explains this in such a way that the conclusion must be that each myth is addressed at different parts of society, instead of different individuals: "But one myth does not exclude another. A story addressed to seafaring people differs from one addressed to people who live on mountains or on settled plains. On the other hand, a myth is not just a story like any other: it embodies a comprehensive ambition, to clarify human life as such" (208). With the individual as multi-layered audience, opinionated on various parts of life, mythology appears to present a view that is open to interpretation, as long as author and audience agree on the basis of their understanding of the subject: "The myth-maker includes in the story whatever is known of life, so far as that knowledge can be expressed in narrative and symbolic terms. The myth proposes

a foundational understanding, and inserts itself as mediation between the community and the natural world" (Donoghue 209). This basis for our understanding of myth thus links it to abstract forms of expression, as it is debatable whether all art has an intention or a purpose. In order, then, to understand the basis for the mythical method in a way which allows us to argue whether a form of coherent narrative as found in myths is transferred to the method encouraged by Eliot, a closer look at the author's use of myth is needed, as a general description might not apply in a method that is so ill-explained. As a member of the international James Joyce foundation, Martha Carpentier concludes from her reading of Eliot's review in *The Dial* that myth was seen as an antidote. This antidote to the "sterility of modern life" came about because of a new understanding of myth and folklore (2). With scientific discoveries, such as the Darwinian theory, came a new understanding of anthropology, explaining the role of myth with primitive culture in such a way that it became a logical parallel with the superstitions and religious deviations of modernity. As Madame Sostrosis is introduced to the reader of *The Waste Land*, it feels almost rude to refuse her the chance to read our fortune as well (Eliot 43). This form of modern religion, fast-paced and heathen but with a strong moral undertone, is one of the examples of the "potent symbolism" of primitive folklore and myth, which was a "new world of religious meaning more suited to their needs than Christianity" for writers of Yeats' generation (Carpentier 3). "Virginia Woolf, like Eliot, felt strongly that her generation must write out of the "living material" of the individual's subjective experience", Carpentier continues (3). As the American scholar sets this movement of writers against literary conventions which dictate artificial characters, it becomes clear that the use of mythology Eliot was surrounded by did not lose its power because of minor inconsistencies. On the contrary, myth was allowed to be kneaded into shape by each individual, as it reflected the subjective, and thus human, experience of the times. The need for living material allowed for an application of myth more suitable to the common understanding of mythology during Eliot's day and age. Roland Barthes, a former linguist at the Sorbonne, describes the modern myth as "a system of communication, ... a message. This allows one to perceive that myth cannot possibly be an object, a concept, or an idea; it is a mode of signification, a form" (24). If this mode of signification is inherently linked to the past, as the aforementioned argues, a possible



narrative within *The Waste Land* would be as much a product of the myth itself as it is of the author. Although Eliot blurs the border between observation and fictional lawlessness, said narrative cannot be constructed outside of history, as we have already determined anthropology to form a significant part of its basis. Carpentier introduces Edward Tylor, first professor of anthropology at Oxford University at the time of Eliot's scholarship at Merton College, Oxford:

"He (Tylor) strove to reform the sanctimonious superiority felt by most of his contemporaries toward "savages" and their beliefs into tolerance and acceptance, not only of modern humanity's direct descent from primitives, but also of its enduring "connexion" with primitivism through survivals. Tylor saw the ancient past very much alive in the present: "It needs but a glance into the trivial details of our own daily life to set us thinking how far we are really its originators, and how far but the transmitters and modifiers of results of long past ages". Thus the seeds of Eliot's mythic method and Joyce's "paralleling of contemporaneity and antiquity" may be seen in Tylor's thoughts. Moreover, Tylor was ahead of his time in foreshadowing psychology's use of primitive myth as a means of self-examination: "they who wish to understand their own lives ought to know the stages through which their opinions and habits have become what they are" (Carpentier 16; Tylor 17-9).

In a time of rapid scientific discoveries, Eliot's search for new forms of expression within literature had to reflect dual points of view throughout his exploration of mankind's past. By turning to his contemporaries, a vast array of descriptive options became available, but none portrayed the darkness in which a combination of the tapering of religion and the first World War had left the society the poet saw around him. Science, combined with Eliot's faith in the individual talent, was to form the basis for an artistic representation of the scientific generation following the Great War, for whom religion represented mythology instead: "... in an age in which traditional religious forms no longer expressed the inner mysteries of being, he argued that psychology brought about a scientific re-discovery of ancient truths, reviving those "truths long since known to Christianity, but mostly forgotten and ignored", and recast them into "a form and a language understandable by modern people to whom the language of Christianity is

not only dead but undecipherable" (Patea 97-8; Eliot 2). Eliot combines this anthropological dive into the unconscious with the mythical by creating short-term characters. Each individual functions as a canvas on which a parallel is drawn, as for instance the unnamed "hyacinth girl", who expresses a feeling of emptiness whilst being linked to the empty sea in Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*: "Oed und leer das Meer" (Eliot 42). As the mythical is combined with the fictional within each character, a first-person narrator is used, in which both Eliot's unconscious choices as an author and the observations of the reader are embedded. As the reader is thus made to be both the observer and the observant, he or she is bestowed with strong interest regarding each character's termination, regardless of being placed outside of chronology. Earlier we concluded that in order to link our understanding of the scientific age in which Eliot lived with the mythical elements he himself connected to these monumental discoveries, an abstract form of narration was needed in order to both create a truly mythical story as well as a narrative thread which does not cease to exist when taken from one person and place to the next. Were we to understand Eliot to be a myth-maker as explained by Donoghue, the binding narrative thread within *The Waste Land* could be an equal to the story told for the benefit of the community. Using Spanos' *Repetition in the Waste Land; a Phenomenological Deconstruction* offers a hypothetical stab at the origin and form of this narrative; that of a Darwinian circle of life which, independent of time, could possibly educate future generations: "The objective historical imagination, on which modern man has prided himself, and which he has cultivated so carefully since the Renaissance is transformed . . . into the mythical imagination for which historical time does not exist - the imagination which sees the actions and events of a particular time merely as the bodying forth of eternal prototypes" (226).

## Chapter 2

The Darwinian theory found in *The Waste Land* finds a basis in the myth of the Holy Grail. It becomes an easy connection to find for the enwrapped reader, and suggestive fingers can be pointed each time we see another mentioning of the search for fertile land. This meandering application of an otherwise continuous storyline invites us, willing as we are to connect and assemble, to see the loose structure of the poem as a nothing more than a mode of division, sweeping us from one interconnected story to the next. However, this would not do the intricate work of Eliot and the sharp alterations of Ezra Pound, as contemporary and editor, the justice it deserves. In order to understand the difference between appropriation and lyrical contortion of a plot or narrative, the latter action here being defined as ‘distortion’ for lack of a better description, the myth of the Holy Grail is very much appropriate. Throughout the poem, various references to the Arthurian myth of the holy grail are made, sometimes also referred to as the fisher king mythology. The mentioned king sees his kingdom become a barren wasteland when he is no longer able to reproduce. It takes magic to restore his health, after which the king grants his saviour the holy grail. This coming together of the sword and the grail is an ancient story of fertility, and thus quickly provokes the idea of linearity due to Eliot's various allusions to it, especially so for its reappearance in multiple passages. Instead of adopting one of the plotlines from the original myth, the author then allows his poetic creation to absorb the individual references of the tale in order to create a mythological framework. The fertility story thus becomes a part of the poetic aesthetics, without the exertion of the implied moral of the myth itself: “There is the empty chapel, only the wind’s home” (Eliot 389).

References such as these point the reader towards the ending and give insight in the short-sightedness of the characters, but the overall plot of the fisher king is never discussed, nor covertly accepted, within the poem. Its implications are only used for a new purpose, forcing the reader to zoom out and look for a furthering of his or her understanding in the grand scheme of Eliot’s allusions. Clare Kinney, professor at the University of Georgia, argues that the reader will find very little when clinging to this belief in Eliot’s hidden opinions: “The reader of *The Waste Land* is ... alternately encouraged and rebuffed as he tries to construct its plot (or plots). The poem seems to be what Roland Barthes would call a “writerly” text, so

limitlessly polysemous that the reader can and must quite literally create it for himself" (275). This conclusion might seem unrealistic at first, as the plethora of references within Eliot's slow build-up towards the end of his imagined times allow the reader to expand his understanding of the poem. However, this is no result of linearity, but rather an example of the mosaic out of which the author has created his verse. Once it is understood that *The Waste Land* does not, in fact, have to be read from start to finish in order to get a grasp of the chronology, the search for straightforward answers disappears together with the reader's initial expectations: "Even as *The Waste Land* offers the reader fragmentary, half-buried glimpses of a goal-directed plot, it equally offers a progress that partakes less of linearity than of restatement and complication. One does not so much pass on from a given action or situation as repeat it; the poem offers a sense of parallel journeying, of traveling over the same territory but examining it from different perspectives" (Kinney 275-6). It follows that if the established opinion is that all five parts of *The Waste Land* stand in horizontal relation to each other, instead of forming a chronologically hierarchical union, then the answer to the question whether there is a unifying narrative to be found in T. S. Eliot's poem can only be placed outside a common logical order. Thus, we have to assume that to convey a message to the audience, the author must have made use of language only to allude to something which is outside of this language, or which cannot be accurately described as such.

In his 1919 essay, *Hamlet and His Problems*, T. S. Eliot introduced the idea of the objective correlative, as a means to express inexplicable concepts by using one or multiple symbolic objects. Within his critique of *Hamlet*, Eliot argued that the audience understands the emotional implications of an action because of its "inevitability", which "lies in this complete adequacy of the external to the emotion" (3). Wimsatt and Beardsley are quoted by Davis and Womack in their work on formalist criticism, the very basis of which is Eliot's idea of the objective correlative, because of their argument that a long-lasting connection between object and emotion springs from poetry: "Poetry is characteristically a discourse about both emotions and objects, or about the emotive qualities of objects. The emotions correlative to the objects of poetry become a part of the matter dealt with ... making them more permanently perceptible when objects have undergone a functional change ... or ... have lost emotive value

with loss of immediacy" (21; 21). By using the idea of the objective correlative, a form of poetry connecting multiple scenes from different times would thus be able to conjure up a unified experience within its readers. This sensation would still be open to individual interpretation, as this "functional change" creates a slightly altered correlative which still retains its essence (22). Davis and Womack explain this durable evoking of an emotion or sensation as integral to "a poetics that rejects temporality" and instead creates "a theory that is ahistorical, one that suggests art may transcend the very context out of which it emerges" (22-23). These statements of ahistorical poetry are quite similar to Eliot's own poetics of impersonality, as explored by Maud Ellman in her book from 1988. Eliot first mentions this impersonality as a key factor to any objective correlative in his aforementioned essay on Hamlet, in which a difference between author, text and reader is created. Eliot argued that the impersonality of a text allows its audience to interpret it within boundaries pre-set by the authors writing, creating equality between the interpretation of the author and the reader: "We are constantly reading the poem against other works of literature... For it is in the silences between the words that meaning flicker, local, evanescent - in the very "wastes" that stretch across the page. These silences curtail the power of the author, for they invite the hypocrite lecteur to reconstruct their broken sense" (Ellman 92).

Because of the adequacy of the balance between the external and the emotive, a text can thus be created which allows its author to conjure up a sensation which is inexplicable and inherently human, as it needs to be understood in equal measure by future generations. This is done by rejuvenating the experience via re-interpretation, fitting the objective correlative in the mould of a new society. Gordon Gamlin of the University of Kobe concludes the following: "The abolishment of a monopoly on the interpretation of art creates a text, which actively engages readers to participate and to bring their own experience and background to the page. The elisions ... are placed deliberately and strategically to guide the reader's response throughout" (78). This use of impersonal poetics creates a double interpretation for all involved, as two layers are presented within each other; Eliot makes use of various characters who are observed by the narrator in such an impersonal style that their actions or struggles come to represent societal ones. Walton Litz, critic and former professor at Princeton, observed

this to be the effect of the mythical method: "What is essentially an internal drama is turned by this method into an external quest whose outcome can only be fragmentary or inconclusive" (458).

### Chapter 3

T. S. Eliot decided that a new form of narration was needed in order to create art for the scientific generation, as the years of the Great War turned out to be an unpassable threshold between religion and society. By means of mythology a modern mode of artistic correspondence would inherit knowledge of the inner mysteries of being, which had yet to be unveiled to this generation. Modern psychology had unearthed the questions regarding the self which ancient mythology addressed. In order to create a text which possessed a mythological basis which would not lose its significance and effect when taken out of its original context, an abstract form of narration was needed. Part of this abstraction, the use of an objective correlative, references but does not adopt the meaning of that which it refers to, creating poetry which communicates an emotive sensation instead of a plot or meaning. The inexplicable emotive sensation described by the author can thus only be a "quest", as Litz calls it, against the self. This sensation appears to the reader in the form of a lack of understanding regarding the human condition, and due to Eliot's use of the mythical method, this question is posed on a personal as well as a societal level. We can only conclude that Litz was right in assuming this quest, or question, to be inconclusive, which is the very nature of art. T. S. Eliot's lingering question intends to prompt creation in the individual as well as the collective, as seems to be the intended use of the mythical method.

*The Crow on the Court*<sup>1</sup>

Hammering<sup>2</sup> on the front gate, they  
 Took out and in<sup>3</sup>, “Gaviria”<sup>4</sup> replaced my  
 Dreams<sup>5</sup>, and traded them for juice<sup>6</sup>  
 I complied and through I went, clank clank<sup>7</sup>  
 As the wailing of the mothers rang the hallway.<sup>8</sup>  
 White stripes overhead<sup>9</sup> with shadow in the court<sup>10</sup>  
 But, it ain’t quiet, no no, cause  
 In the jungle there we reigned<sup>11</sup>  
 There we were the first, made from dough<sup>12</sup>  
 Until the fire and water, too late<sup>13</sup>  
 Maybe next time

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<sup>1</sup> The title refers to *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander’s work on mass incarceration of black men. Court here is both the courtroom and the court in the middle of the state penitentiary.

<sup>2</sup> The police officer pounds on the door, both of the man’s apartment and on the entrance to the state penitentiary. Gaviria is one of the most common family names in Colombia and comes from the Basque origins ‘gabi’, meaning smith or blacksmith, and ‘ria’, which means being near. A Gaviria is an individual who is an assistant to a blacksmith, and who helps shape something without being in full charge.

<sup>3</sup> Out his house, into jail.

<sup>4</sup> The man reads the officer’s namebadge whilst being taken to jail.

<sup>5</sup> In Ronald Reagan’s famous televised statement about the war on drugs, his wife Nancy said “drugs replace a child’s dreams and replace it with a nightmare”.

<sup>6</sup> African American slang term meaning both ‘respect’ and ‘drugs’, depending on the context. It also refers to Kendrick Lamar’s *The Blacker the Berry, the Sweeter the Juice*, an extremely popular hip-hop song in African American Vernacular English which won the 2016 award for empowerment of the Black American community. The album it is featured on, *To Pimp a Butterfly*, is formed as a statement against the incarceration of black men by American police officers.

<sup>7</sup> The sound of his feet hitting the ground and of the door of the cell closing behind him.

<sup>8</sup> The mothers who all lost their husbands and sons to the mass incarceration of black men. The wailing of the mother is the first reference to the Banshee, a motherly figure who heralds the death of a person. The traditional Irish mourning involves a wailing woman: the Caoineadh, she who wails.

<sup>9</sup> The trails airplanes in the sky, which is a reference to cocaine, the drug imported by Pablo Escobar via the involvement of the Reagan administration in the Contra wars in South America. This started the need to uphold the War on Drugs, which Ronald Reagan himself had started, resulting in the incarceration of thousands of black men in the U.S. Escobar started his trafficking business with a single airplane, which flew cocaine directly to Miami, the first cocaine ever imported into the United States.

<sup>10</sup> An airplane low overhead, but also referring to the “shadow under this red rock” in *The Waste Land*, line 26. The righteous king who shall be like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land in the “there we reigned” of line 8.

<sup>11</sup> The anti-narrative against the racism seen in so many police officers is the “we were kings” tale heard in many American ghettos. It is a story told to African American children, linking the first origins of mankind and the empires of old to sub-Saharan Africa, resulting in the phrase “all of us wear a crown!”, encouraging African Americans to hold their head up high. It is referred to in most black stories and in many hip-hop songs.

The jungle refers to Escobar’s first cocaine labs, which were hidden in the Columbian jungle and where he was called El Senor, meaning The Lord, in order not to betray Escobar’s name.

<sup>12</sup> Dough means both money and the paste out of which cocaine is made, and the phrase is taken from the Columbian proverb “We are all made from the same clay, but not from the same mould”. This links it to the fable that all people were created from clay, which sub-Saharan tribes told to their children (something I was taught by the Masai tribe during my visit to Tanzania).

<sup>13</sup> Fire and water are the biblical ways in which the world might end, as used by James Baldwin in his esteemed essay on race in America: *The Fire Next Time*, in which the title itself is a reference to a slave song and to Noah’s Ark. The blue and red of fire and water give off the image of a police siren, a sign of injustice and fear for many African Americans.



*The Old Soul, New Me*<sup>14</sup>

Mum

Stop screaming<sup>15</sup>Shuffling feet towards a crooked edge<sup>16</sup>

Catch me if I can

You'll never pay those awful mags again<sup>17</sup>Drip<sup>18</sup> it said so, a white coat does miracles this season<sup>19</sup>Drip Oh Anthropos, please fit me<sup>20</sup>Rolling softly<sup>21</sup>, with shaky fingers as we skip<sup>22</sup>Towards heavy shoulders and soothing water<sup>23</sup>


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<sup>14</sup> A reference to *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway, and the description of the character as an old soul who is thus closer to death, even longs for it, as life has simple been enough. "New Me" is the message found on almost all blogs and websites concerning anorexia nervosa, as these young people attempt to create a new form of themselves. Once they have become this new person, the fight against the self will be over, or so is the myth they tell each other.

<sup>15</sup> Here death is repeated in the form of a mother who wails.

<sup>16</sup> The girl stands on top of the askew tower in my hometown, where she intended to jump off. It is also a reference to the crooked lines on the floor of the hospital, which she saw as a threshold she did not want to step over.

<sup>17</sup> Mags are magazines here, and fashion ones especially. They conjure up an image of too-skinny models and photoshopped covers.

<sup>18</sup> The repeated drip is from the IV machine. It also creates an image of water, which has gotten a negative connotation because of the lines before.

<sup>19</sup> A line read in the magazine, and the classic image of the doctor's coat, who is seen by many as a modern-day shaman.

<sup>20</sup> Oh Anthropos comes from Mariken van Nimwegen, a famous myth in The Netherlands and Germany about a young girl who travels alongside the devil out of self-hatred. When she threatens to leave him, the devil drops her from the sky onto the main square of the city. Her uncle screams "Oh Anthropos, come and take my soul" when he sees Mariken has fallen out of the air and appears to be dead.

"Please fit me" is a reference to Eliot's second-to-last line: "Why then Ile fit you". It also refers to the fitting of clothing, an obsession for anyone who suffers from anorexia.

<sup>21</sup> The rolling of a marihuana joint. Marihuana is smoked by almost all patients in mental institutes, as it keeps them from overthinking.

<sup>22</sup> The dripping of the IV has become the wet rock which the character skips, after her time in hospital. It also means the jump to a new scene and the fragmentarily remembered journey home.

<sup>23</sup> The shoulders of both the parents and society, to which the patient is a burden, and who see her illness as something they created, causing the burden of guilt. The soothing water is the glass of water with which to swallow pills fighting depression, but water no longer has a positive connotation here, as mentioned before.

### Exegesis

In order to combine the mythic method and the use of objective correlatives with a modern interpretation, we made use of the Celtic myth of the banshee: a motherly figure who wails for the loss of a child, and thus is doomed to repeat the cycle. Two interconnected parts of the poem were used, in which the banshee-myth became a parallel to the modern medicine and its use of drugs, in which the latter has a double function. The emotive experience, as concluded from *The Waste Land*, was intended to be a sense of discontent with the self. This internal sensation was externalised towards the societal problems of anorexia, in which the modern myth of the artificial beauty is incorporated, and the system of mass-incarceration of African American men, which is interconnected with the War on Drugs as started by the Reagan administration. This brings in the modern-day myth of Pablo Escobar, as a personification of the paradox of drugs trafficking in the United States. The evasive strategies employed by Eliot, appearing as a loose structure of plot throughout *The Waste Land*, is mirrored in the myth of the Banshee; Death seems to come closer towards the characters when in fact this is never confirmed. Two parts of the poem were created as a means of seeming opposition, creating two halves of a whole in which the focus switches from internalised to externalised emotive sensation. The myth of drugs-trafficking is problematised by the hospital scene in *The Old Soul, New Me*. This second part employs the myth of *Mariken van Nimwegen*, a middle-age Germanic story with a strong moral message. As the methods of *The Waste Land* are observed, this morality is contorted instead of adopted, especially as the link between personal decisions and the course of life is questioned by *The Crow on the Court*. As the question regarding understanding of the self, and so also society, is established by these interconnected mythologies, Eliot's combination of the mythical method and various objective correlatives anchor the text in multiple frames of time, prompting creativity in the reader as the emotive sensation remains paired with unanswerable questions.

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