

LITERATURE ASSESSMENT COVER SHEET 2020–21

Student Number	09014414
Module Title and Code	Avant-garde Literature (UQ310822)
Assessment No. and Description	Assessment 1 (3000-word essay)
Essay Question/Title/No.	<i>(Question No.1) 'To what extent did Eliot make use of the texts, techniques and ideas of French symbolism in The Waste Land? Discuss with detailed reference to both Eliot's poem and the work of one or more of Baudelaire and/or Mallarmé.'</i>
Word Count (excluding footnotes and bibliography)	3191 words
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Days late	0

T.S. Eliot made great use of the texts, techniques and ideas of the French Symbolists – most notably, those of the face of the movement; Charles Baudelaire. While he incorporates direct quotation of multiple Baudelarean texts, he also adapts his imagery for use in a similar setting, particularly that of Baudelaire's poem 'Le Cygne'. The technique of Baudelarean collage is also transferred, both in the shape of its conception, and in its evolved state. Eliot also took on board the mantle of the 'chiffonnier', the literary 'ragpicker', from Baudelaire, incorporating the idea into his role as the poet.

T.S. Eliot was greatly influenced by Baudelaire, even so far as to directly incorporate his works into his own magnum opus. This is confirmed by R. Galand, who writes that 'in this rich and strange mosaic, *The Waste Land*, the reader is referred three times to *Les Fleurs du mal*'.¹ That is not to say, however, that Eliot only directly carried over aspects from Baudelaire's work – he also adapted specific instances of imagery from Baudelarean Paris into his own depiction of London. Richard Edward Palmer bolsters this point, clarifying the dual-strand nature of Eliot's Baudelarean influence; 'T.S. Eliot not only shows certain affinities with Baudelaire indirectly in the major concerns of his poetry and directly in specific quotations from such poems as 'Au Lecteur' and 'Le Cygne' in *The Waste Land*'.² The most obvious of Eliot's implementations of Baudelaire into 'The Waste Land' is in the last line of his opening section, 'The Burial of the Dead' where he writes; 'You! Hypocrite Lecteur! – mon semblance, - mon frere!', a direct quotation of Baudelaire's own last line in his opening poem of 'Les Fleurs du mal', 'Au Lecteur'.³ This quotation has not gone unnoticed, Yvor Winters, in 1947, stated that 'it is no accident that the last line of the introductory poem of 'The Waste Land' is also the last line of the preface of *Les Fleurs du mal*. That preface details the sins of the modern world as they appeared to Baudelaire, and it names the most horrible of them all the sin of Ennui' – as we will see later, the sins of the modern world according to Baudelaire end up bleeding over into Eliot's work throughout the piece.⁴ Eliot also begins the final stanza of 'The Burial of the Dead', which includes the aforementioned 'Au Lecteur' quotation, with another direct reference to Baudelaire as he talks of an 'Unreal City'. This is an adaption, noted on by Eliot himself in his published footnotes, of Baudelaire's 'Fourmillante cite' from his poem 'Le sept vieillards'.⁵

As mentioned above, however, Eliot did not incorporate Baudelaire's work through direct quotation of him, he also adapted imagery specific to Baudelaire's similar work into his own. Winters elaborates on this point, detailing how Eliot, through his writing, created 'a portrait of a society from which grace has been withdrawn and which is dying of its own triviality and ugliness [...] the matter of 'The Waste Land' is Baudelarean'.⁶ Baudelaire depicts the crowds of Paris within his poem 'Le Cygne' as uniform and quiet in their movement, like the movement of the undead; 'There, one morning, at the hour when Labor awakens / Beneath the clear, cold sky when the dismal hubbub / Of street-cleaners and scavengers breaks the silence'.⁷ Baudelaire also depicts the flow of time as similar to that of a body of water – in

¹ Galand, R., 'T.S. Eliot and the Impact of Baudelaire' in *Yale French Studies* No. 6 (1950), p. 27

² Palmer, Richard Edward, 'A Study of Existentialism in Certain Poems by Charles Baudelaire, R.M. Rilke, and T.S. Eliot' (1959), in *University of Redlands Doctoral Dissertations (20th Century)*
<<https://inspire.redlands.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=phd20thcentury>>

³ Eliot, T.S., 'The Burial of the Dead' in *The Waste Land* (London: W.W. Norton & Company: 2001), line 76

⁴ Winters, Yvor, *In Defence of Reason* (Athens, OH: Alan Swallow Press: 1947) p.497

⁵ Eliot, 'The Burial of the Dead', line 60

⁶ Winters, *In Defence of Reason*, p. 497

⁷ Baudelaire, Charles, *Le Cygne* [accessed: 20/10/2020] <<https://fleursdumal.org/poem/220>>

this case, the classical Simois river of the Trojan plain; ‘That little stream / That mirror, poor and sad [...] That false Simois swollen by your tears, / Suddenly made fruitful by teeming memory’⁸

Eliot adapts this imagery and sentiment of ‘mixing / memory and desire’ throughout ‘The Waste Land’, and it’s not too difficult to see the aspects he continued on from Baudelaire’s own work.⁹ Eliot writes that ‘A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many / I had not thought death had undone so many. / Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled’ – this incorporates Baudelaire’s imagery of the masses as a flowing unit and time as a liquid form, similar to a Classical river, into a singular aspect.¹⁰ This is also seen when the worlds of the past and present come to merge into one when a recognisable face is seen in the flow of a Stygian horde; ‘There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying, “Stetson! / You were with me in the ships at Mylae!”’¹¹ Altogether, this passage adapts two separate pieces of Baudelaire’s imagery into a more cohesive, singular piece. This symbolized language, of water as a mirror to another world – in this case, the underworld - and of the city-dwellers being depicted as the Tartarean masses are key examples of the philosophy of the Symbolists, where ‘Symbolist artists sought to express individual emotional experience through the subtle and suggestive use of highly symbolized language’.¹²

It is also true that Eliot also incorporated Baudelaire’s idea of the city being a place devoid of life, not only through the existence of a purgatorial horde but through the imagery devoted to colour. Baudelaire speaks of the stream in ‘Le Cygne’ as having ‘glittered long ago’ – and, as we have previously discussed that the ‘false Simois’ acts as a projection of the past into the present, we can infer from this that Baudelaire speaks of the past having been colourful and beautiful, as it ‘glittered’ and sparkled as if it were made of jewels.¹³ This scene is reflected when Baudelaire sees, ‘only in memory’ naturally occurring colour as he remembers; ‘the huge stone blocks stained green in puddles of water’.¹⁴¹⁵ Marianne Thormählen, in her essay ‘The City in *The Waste Land*’ talks of this aspect bleeding into Eliot’s London, stating that; ‘like the capital Perle of Alfred Kubin’s dream kingdom and Baudelaire’s hibernal Paris, Eliot’s London admits no brilliant colours’.¹⁶ London is depicted as being almost monochromatic, except from being ‘under the brown fog of a winter dawn’.¹⁷ This adaptation of a visually bleak world, reflecting the dire straits in which the half-dead inhabitants of the city live is an extension of Baudelaire’s Paris, as is reflected by his own memories.

Eliot was not only influenced by the core Symbolist texts of Baudelaire, but also by his own writing techniques. In the opening paragraph of my essay proper, I quoted from R. Galand’s ‘T.S. Eliot and the Impact of Baudelaire’, as he referred to ‘The Waste Land’ as a ‘mosaic’. I believe that, not only was he detailing Eliot’s use of Baudelaire’s words within his own

⁸ Baudelaire, *Le Cygne*, lines 1-5

⁹ Eliot, ‘The Burial of the Dead’, lines 2-5

¹⁰ Eliot, ‘The Burial of the Dead’, line 62-64

¹¹ Eliot, ‘The Burial of the Dead’, lines 69-70

¹² ‘Symbolism: Literary and Artistic Movement’ in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* [accessed: 20/10/2020] <<https://www.britannica.com/art/Symbolism-literary-and-artistic-movement/additional-info>>

¹³ Baudelaire, *Le Cygne*, line 02

¹⁴ Baudelaire, *Le Cygne*, line 09

¹⁵ Baudelaire, *Le Cygne*, line 11

¹⁶ Thormählen, Marianne, ‘The City in *The Waste Land*’ in *The Waste Land*, ed. Michael North (New York, NY: WW. Norton & Company: 2001) p.237

¹⁷ Eliot, ‘Burial of the Dead’, line 61

poem, but that he was perhaps also indicating towards Baudelaire's literary technique of 'collage'.¹⁸ Baudelarean collage incorporates the Symbolist idea of extrapolating from words subtle, intrinsic meaning – something found in much of Baudelaire's work, so much so that Wallace Fowlie, in his 'Brief History of French Symbolism', called Baudelaire; 'the *voyant*, the seer looking for and finding the meaning of things'.¹⁹ Baudelarean collage incorporates the voices and lifestyles of those who would not have usually been thrust into the poetic limelight – the socially outcast. Daisy Sainsbury, in her essay 'Refiguring Baudelaire's 'poète-chiffonnier' in Contemporary French Poetry' details this, talking of how collage's 'inventory of poetic imagery extends to include the figures and events of modern life that were previously regarded as being outside the remit of poetry. The hierarchy of 'appropriate' poetic subjects is collapsed, and the poet finds his inspiration indiscriminately'.²⁰ This may not come as a massive surprise to anyone who has read at least some of Baudelaire's work – his mind has always navigated to work into the lives of those not traditionally given a second-look. Cecilia Enjuto-Rangel bolsters this point, going so far as to state that 'for Baudelaire, beauty is always strange and its poetic subjects must be estranged'.²¹

This idea can be seen in 'The Cygne' as Baudelaire talks of 'the negress, wasted and consumptive, / Trudging through muddy streets', of 'the puny orphans withering like flowers' and of 'the captives, of the vanquished!...of many others too!'^{22 23 24} This shift to focussing on the downtrodden and 'unappealing' of poetry subjects is very Baudelarean, and makes the transition – like many of Baudelaire's ideas – into the works of T.S. Eliot. Galand writes that 'Eliot praises him for making the trivial great [...] in the poetical process, there is an actual transmutation of elements, and the lower of components, the greater of success'.²⁵ The section of the poem which focusses on a brief encounter with a 'Mr Eugenidas' begins with a marker of Baudelarean influence. As the final stanza of 'The Burial of the Dead' begins, this section of Baudelarean influence also starts with a reference, talking of the 'Unreal City' - as has been spoken of before, this is an adaption, noted on by Eliot himself, of Baudelaire's 'Fourmillante cite'.²⁶ Returning to the concept of Baudelaire's collage incorporating voices previously not heard, Eliot chooses to speak of a 'Mr Eugenidas, the Smyrna merchant / Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants'.²⁷ The fact that he is a merchant - a common man, with a common trade – and unshaven show that he is human with faults and flaws like the rest of us. The stanza continues, detailing how he 'asked me in demotic French / To luncheon' – 'demotic' being defined as 'a form of language used by ordinary people', and the fact that he is speaking demotic French indicating that he is a common man, without the education or formal training to speak in a 'higher' tongue.^{28 29}

¹⁸ Galand, *Yale French Studies* p.27

¹⁹ Fowlie, Wallace, *Poet and Symbol: A Brief History of French Symbolism* (State College, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press: 1990) p.32

²⁰ Sainsbury, Daisy, 'Refiguring Baudelaire's 'poète-chiffonnier' in Contemporary French Poetry' in *French Cultural Studies* Vol. 28:03 (2017)

²¹ Enjuto-Rangel, Cecilia, 'Broken Presents: The Modern City in Ruins in Baudelaire, Cernuda, and Paz' in *Composite Literature* Vol.59:02 (2007) p. 145

²² Baudelaire, *Le Cygne*, line 48

²³ Baudelaire, *Le Cygne*, lines 41-42

²⁴ Baudelaire, *Le Cygne*, line 52

²⁵ Galand, *Yale French Studies* p.30

²⁶ Eliot, 'The Fire Sermon', line 207

²⁷ Eliot, 'The Fire Sermon', lines 209-210

²⁸ Eliot, 'The Fire Sermon', lines 212-213

²⁹ Cambridge English Dictionary, [accessed: 20/10/2020]

<<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/demotic>>

Returning to the Symbolist idea of attempting to ‘arouse a particular emotion in the reader, not by the expression of the emotion as felt by the poet, but by a carefully elaborated poetical formula’, Eliot incorporates this into his writing, detailing how Mr Eugenidas has invited you to ‘luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel / Followed by a weekend at the Metropole’.^{30 31}

While this may seem purely innocent, when looking at the proposal behind the words, it can be seen to indicate that the luncheon and weekend-break are tinged with a homosexual input, then even further pushing Mr Eugenidas into the category used in Baudelarean collage – not only is he a common man, who speaks in a common tongue, but he is perhaps a homosexual man – and as such, is a social outcast at the time of writing, much in the way that Baudelaire’s ‘negress’ was.

Baudelarean collage, as defined by Baudelaire at the time, had a sole, noble focus on bringing the plights of the common person into the poetical world. However, society has evolved since then, and as such persons who may well have been poetically undesirable in the past are now commonplace in the work of 20th and 21st century writers. As such, Baudelarean collage has had to evolve, and the concept of using all that is available to you – previously, people and imagery - has ventured into the realm of the words themselves. Sainsbury details this shift, stating that; ‘Baudelaire’s original conception sat within a lyrical framework, stressing, for example, the potential of ‘unpoetic’ poetic imagery; today, the significance of a ragpicking poetics rests in the way it transforms poetic discourse’.³²

This shift sees Eliot take on a strand of Baudelarean collage, that of a literary mosaic, with literal sections of completely different sources implanted into his own work - like a Frankenstein’s monster - to create an original voice. ‘The Waste Land’ is described by ‘The Poetry Archive’ as Eliot’s ‘bleak masterpiece of psychic fragmentation. With its collage of voices’.³³ This is a reflection of Baudelaire’s idea of the poet as a ‘chiffonnier’: a ragpicker who collects the rubbish scraps of modern existence and then re-appropriates them in the poem’.³⁴ Eliot’s mixing of different voices in ‘The Waste Land’, from different times and of different ages, causes this ‘mixing [of] memory and desire’.³⁵ This can be seen in the opening stanza of ‘The Burial of the Dead’, when the reminiscence of a childhood memory and the voice of an unknown speaker – in a language foreign to that of the poem – are placed next to one another. A voice, perhaps not Eliot’s, speaks of the time; ‘when we were children, staying at the arch-duke’s’, which is abruptly interrupted by a German voice proclaiming, in their native tongue, that ‘Bin gar keine Russin, stamm’ aus Litauen, echt deutsch’.^{36 37} Michael H. Levenson speaks on this multilingual layout of the poem, commenting that ‘a strain exists between the presumed identity of the poem’s speaker and the instability of the speaker’s world. If this is the speech of one person, it has the range of many personalities and many voices’.³⁸ He goes on to detail further, regarding the German voice heard in this first stanza, commenting on the fact that these are in fact different voices – stating it as a ‘new voice’;

³⁰ Eliot, ‘The Fire Sermon’, lines 213-214

³¹ Galand, *Yale French Studies* p. 30

³² Sainsbury, *French Cultural Studies*

³³ ‘About T.S. Eliot’, in *The Poetry Archive* [accessed: 20/10/2020] <<https://poetryarchive.org/poet/t-s-eliot/>>

³⁴ Sainsbury, *French Cultural Studies*

³⁵ Eliot, ‘The Burial of the Dead’, line 207

³⁶ Eliot, ‘The Burial of the Dead’, line 12

³⁷ Eliot, ‘The Burial of the Dead’, lines 13-14

³⁸ Levenson, Michael H., *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1984)

‘The line of German aggravates the strain, challenging the fragile continuity that has been established. Here is a new voice with a new subject-matter, speaking in another language, resisting assimilation’.³⁹

It can now be seen that Baudelarean collage has progressed from the ‘simple’ inclusion of those socially disregarded to the inclusion of the literal voices of non-poetic works – be they the voices of other ‘characters’ or, as we can see further in the same section of poem, entirely different pieces of literature. As is defined by the ‘Poetry Foundation’, Baudelarean collage ‘in language-based work can now mean any composition that includes words, phrases, or sections of outside source material in juxtaposition’, they go on to use Eliot’s work as the prime example of the Symbolist technique, stating that ‘an early example is T.S. Eliot’s “The Waste Land”, which includes newspaper clippings, music lyrics, nursery rhymes, and overheard speech’.^{40 41} This adaption of Baudelarean collage to incorporate not only different voices, but voices in other media, can – as is stated by The Poetry Foundation – be found in ‘The Waste Land’. Only one stanza from our last example, can we find the beginning lyrics of Richard Wagner’s opera ‘Tristan und Isolde’, carried over in their native German; ‘Frisch weht der Wind / Der Heimat zu / Mein Irisch Kind, / Wo weilest du’.⁴²

Baudelaire’s reach within the technique of the collage is not restricted to the technique itself but he saw that the idea of the ‘chiffonnier’, or ‘ragpicker’, could be expanded to incorporate the poet themselves – as an external figure, outwith the restraints of the poem, as a master of the world they are creating. Sainsbury details this sentiment, talking of how, ‘for Baudelaire, the ‘chiffonnier’ represents an ambiguous and multi-dimensional figure, situated on the fringes of society’ and that ‘the analogy between ragpicker and poet is apparent: both sort through ‘debris’ of the modern city, re-appropriating what others have discarded, re-evaluating their trash as potential sources of pleasure, function and aesthetic value’.^{43 44} Through the eyes of the ‘multi-dimensional figure’ of the chiffonnier, it can be seen that both Eliot and Baudelaire looked upon their perception of their respective cities as self-contained works of art, to be investigated and documented through their poetry – letting their words become more powerful than they would otherwise be, in the same way as they had gained more influence as the poet. This concept is expanded upon further by Wallace Fowlie, who writes of Baudelaire that he ‘took possession of Paris, to see the city in its multiple aspects of horror and beauty [...] [he] was a native Parisian whose curiosity about vice became a mode of investigation’. Lyndall Gordon continues this point, who writes on Eliot’s work for the British Library, stating that; ‘in some ways *The Waste Land* is a social document accumulating evidence against civilization through the ages. At the same time the poem is a vision of sorts, a vision of horror [...] a city of dead souls’.⁴⁵

³⁹ Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922*

⁴⁰ *The Poetry Foundation* [accessed: 20/10/2020] <<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary-terms/collage>>

⁴¹ ‘Glossary of Poetic Terms: Collage’ in *The Poetry Foundation* [accessed: 20/10/2020] <<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary-terms/collage>>

⁴² Eliot, ‘The Burial of the Dead’, lines 32-35

⁴³ Sainsbury, *French Cultural Studies*

⁴⁴ Sainsbury, *French Cultural Studies*

⁴⁵ Gordon, Lyndall, ‘City of Dead Souls: *The Waste Land* and the Modern Movement’ in The British Library (May 2016) [accessed: 20/10/2020] <<https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/city-of-dead-souls-the-waste-land-and-the-modern-moment>>

Baudelaire and Eliot's use of their power as the chiffonnier to create 'vision[s] of horror' and images of 'a city of dead souls' are continuations of Baudelaire's belief in the deterioration of the human soul in the life of the contemporary man, through living in these hellscapes called cities. Wallace Fowlie bolsters this point, talking of how 'the two poets speak of the death inherent in each life, but especially of the spiritual death of modern man'.⁴⁶ Thormählen shares in their grief and despair regarding the cesspool nature of the city, talking specifically about how Eliot portrays 'the modern city, as the concentrated pool of barren humanity'.⁴⁷ Baudelaire depicts this deterioration of the city in his investigation of his home city of Paris through concealing the outside world in an elemental veil, as he hides 'the absent coco-palms of splendid Africa / Behind the immense wall of mist', and the city that is left behind leaves its own inhabitants on the verge of death; 'withering like flowers'.^{48 49} Richard Edward Palmer details how Baudelaire writes the city landscape as inhospitable and hellish, he writes that Baudelaire finds that 'the *Dürftigkeit* of the modern world as a home for human beings is evident' and that 'the deserted time of day also tends to strengthen the impression of lifelessness of the street and buildings'.^{50 51} This sentiment is passed on to Eliot, as is detailed by Harriet Davidson, who talks of the 'Unreal City' stanza of 'The Burial of the Dead' which has been touched upon frequently in the previous sections of the essay, as she states that 'the "Unreal City" passage returns to a symbolic, static vision of London as a suffocating hell'.⁵² This can be seen as Eliot continues Baudelaire's concealment of the outside world through a cruel climate, as he writes of an 'Unreal City / Under the brown fog', where the animated corpses of its inhabitant swarm as a mass, and he is astonished as to the amount, writing that 'I had not thought death had undone so many'.^{53 54}

Wallace Fowlie wrote of the 20th century that 'the principal characteristic is, according to Baudelaire and to more contemporary poets, notably T.S. Eliot, disorder. Disorder in every domain' and I believe that that sentiment can be seen throughout both poets' work.⁵⁵ Disorder as a theme, which is then directly quoted from a selection of Baudelaire's writing to Eliot's 'Waste Land', and then the imagery used is adapted for use again. Disorder though Baudelarean collage, where disorder is created through the incorporation of imagery and peoples who were not traditionally depicted in poetry. This is then perpetuated by Eliot through evolving collage to create disorder through the introduction of multiple voices, and external works of literature and art. Then this disorder is investigated, and documented, by the poets as the idea of the Baudelarean 'chiffonnier' is incorporated, and the shift of the poets turns to the cities; to the waste lands that they have become. To conclude this essay, I would like to quote Cleanth Brooks Jr's piece, for 'The Southern Review', 'The Waste Land: An Analysis'. In it, he shares my own feelings, for having only touched the surface on the works of both men, I feel like I may have already said too much, on too little; that 'to venture

⁴⁶ Fowlie, Wallace, 'Baudelaire and Eliot: Interpreters of Their Age' in *The Sewanee Review* Vol.74:01 (1966)

⁴⁷ Thormählen, 'The City in *The Waste Land*' p.240

⁴⁸ Baudelaire, *Le Cygne*, line 48

⁴⁹ Baudelaire, *Le Cygne*, lines 43-44

⁵⁰ Palmer, *University of Redlands Doctoral Dissertations (20th Century)*, line 357

⁵¹ Palmer, *University of Redlands Doctoral Dissertations (20th Century)*, p. 356

⁵² Davidson, Harriet, 'Improper Desire: Reading *The Waste Land*' in *The Cambridge Companion to T.S. Eliot*, ed. by Anthony David Moody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1994) p.128

⁵³ Eliot, '*The Burial of the Dead*', line 63

⁵⁴ Eliot, '*The Burial of the Dead*', lines 60-61

⁵⁵ Fowlie, *Poet and Symbol: A Brief History of French Symbolism* p.38

to write anything further on *The Waste Land* [...] may call for some explanation and even an apology'.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Brooks Jr., Cleanth, 'The Waste Land: An Analysis' in *The Southern Review*, Vol.3:1 (1937)

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