

## FRAGMENTED SELVES IN MODERNIST LITERATURE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF T.S. ELIOT'S "THE WASTE LAND" AND FAIZ AHMED FAIZ'S "DAST-E-SABA"

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the theme of fragmented identity in modernist poetry through a comparative analysis of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Faiz Ahmed Faiz's *Dast-e-Saba*. Though emerging from different cultural and historical contexts, both poets reflect the psychological and existential crises of their times through complex images and modernist structures. Using the lens of modernist theory and comparative literature, this paper investigates how both texts articulate disillusionment, the collapse of traditional values, and the internal fragmentation of the self. While Eliot paints a bleak vision of post-war Europe's spiritual wasteland, Faiz channels the trauma of political oppression and exile into poetic reflection. The paper argues that modernist literature, despite cultural and linguistic differences, expresses universal anxieties of identity and loss, making it a global literary movement. This comparative study offers insights into how Eastern and Western modernist poets negotiate alienation and cultural rupture, and how poetry becomes a means of psychological and political resistance.

**Keywords:** Modernism, fragmentation, comparative literature, identity, disillusionment.

### INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century marked a turning point in human history, characterized by world wars, economic depression, technological acceleration, and the collapse of traditional religious and cultural certainties. In this volatile atmosphere, literature responded by undergoing a radical transformation, giving rise to what is now widely known as modernism. Modernist literature, particularly poetry, abandoned linear narratives and romantic idealism in favor of disjointed structures, fragmented voices, and complex symbolism. As Peter Childs (2016) notes,

modernism "emerged out of a sense of crisis in representation" and aimed to mirror the psychological, social, and spiritual fragmentation of modern life (p. 17).

This paper explores the theme of fragmented identity within modernist poetry by undertaking a comparative analysis of two canonical yet culturally distinct poets: T.S. Eliot and Faiz Ahmed Faiz. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), often regarded as the quintessence of Western modernism, captures the post-World War I disillusionment of Europe. In contrast, Faiz's

Dast-e-Saba (1952), written in the aftermath of colonial disintegration and amid political repression in South Asia, reflects an Eastern engagement with modernist concerns, filtered through the lenses of resistance, exile, and human longing. Despite differences in geography, language, and ideology, both poets articulate the universal crisis of the self—fractured by historical trauma, alienation, and loss of meaning.

The need to study Eliot and Faiz side by side stems from the increasing recognition of modernism as a global phenomenon. Susan Stanford Friedman (2006) emphasizes that “modernism cannot be confined to the borders of Europe or the Anglophone world” a view that justifies the relevance of comparative literary analysis across linguistic and cultural lines. While Eliot constructs a landscape of spiritual barrenness and cultural decay, Faiz offers a vision of modernist struggle tempered by hope and resistance. Faiz's poetics, though rooted in classical Urdu forms like the ghazal, resonates with the thematic complexities of modernism such as personal alienation, political betrayal, and cultural fragmentation.

This study draws on modernist theory, psychoanalytic criticism, and postcolonial comparative frameworks to argue that *The Waste Land* and *Dast-e-Saba* are both emblematic of a modernist identity that is deeply fractured, yet capable of cultural introspection and resistance. By exploring the thematic, structural, and linguistic dimensions of both poems, the paper aims to uncover the shared—and contrasting—modes in which East and West register the existential disintegration of the modern subject. In doing so, this research contributes to the growing body of scholarship that seeks to decolonize modernism and understand it as a plural, cross-cultural movement (Bassnett, 1993; Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1978).

### Theoretical Framework

A nuanced understanding of modernist poetry, particularly in a comparative framework involving T.S. Eliot and Faiz Ahmed Faiz, requires engagement with three critical lenses: modernist literary theory, the concept of fragmented identity, and the methodology of comparative literature. These intersecting frameworks allow for a contextual, psychological,

and cross-cultural reading of poetic texts that emerge from distinct but parallel crises of modernity.

### Modernist Literary Theory

Modernism, as a literary movement, represents a radical break from the traditions of the 19th century. Defined by its experimentation in form, dislocation of narrative coherence, and introspective subjectivity, modernism reflects the cultural fragmentation and philosophical disillusionment that followed World War I, the decline of empire, and rapid urbanization (Bradbury 1995). Peter Childs (2016) describes modernism as “an aesthetic response to the shattered certainties of the age,” which often takes the form of non-linear narratives, symbolic ambiguity, and mythic intertextuality (p. 18).

T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* is paradigmatic in this respect, utilizing fragmentation, multiple voices, and intertextual allusion to dramatize the spiritual barrenness of post-war Europe. According to David Lodge (1981), Eliot's style exemplifies “a self-conscious crisis of civilization,” foregrounding decay, disillusionment, and loss of identity (p. 47). Faiz, while emerging from a different historical and political context, similarly grapples with alienation, oppression, and broken ideals. His modernism, however, infuses the traditional ghazal form with themes of political exile and collective suffering (Kiernan, 1971).

### Fragmented Identity and the Self

A central preoccupation of modernist literature is the fragmentation of identity. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic model—particularly the conflict between the id, ego, and superego—provides a useful framework for understanding this disintegration. Eliot's poetic voice, shifting from speaker to speaker in *The Waste Land*, reflects a self that is no longer unified, but splintered across time, culture, and consciousness (Levenson, 1986). Charles Taylor (1989) argues that modern identity is “fragile and plural,” constantly threatened by the collapse of inherited frameworks of meaning (p. 28). Ahmad et al. (2022) and Amjad et al. (2021) also affirm this. Julia Kristeva's (1982) theory of abjection further expands this idea by linking fragmentation to the loss of coherent subjectivity and the intrusion of trauma into personal space. In Faiz's poetry, particularly *Dast-e-Saba*, the fragmented self

appears not only as a psychological condition but also as a sociopolitical one. His verses oscillate between the personal and the political, mourning not just individual despair but the collapse of collective hope. This dual fragmentation—of the self and society—underscores a common thread with Eliot, whose vision of disintegration is more metaphysical but equally intense.

### Comparative Literature and Cross-Cultural Modernism

The comparative methodology employed in this study is informed by postcolonial and global approaches to literature. Susan Bassnett (1993) argues that comparative literature is not merely about identifying similarities but about exploring how texts from different cultures negotiate their unique modernities. In this vein, Gayatri Spivak (2003) emphasizes the importance of reading across languages and ideologies to deconstruct hegemonic narratives and unearth submerged voices.

The act of comparing Eliot and Faiz also necessitates an awareness of cultural hybridity. Understanding cultural factors also considered important by Akram et al. (2021) and (2022). Homi Bhabha's (1994) notion of the "Third Space" is particularly useful in this context, as it offers a conceptual ground where the colonial and postcolonial, East and West, can be read not in opposition but in dialogue. While Eliot's modernism is rooted in the spiritual aftermath of Western war and decay, Faiz's modernist voice emerges from a colonial rupture and a continuing struggle for justice. Yet both share a commitment to representing the human condition in its most fractured and introspective form.

Thus, this framework combines the historical specificity of modernism with the universalist concern of identity fragmentation and the methodological richness of comparative literature. It sets the stage for a close reading of *The Waste Land* and *Dast-e-Saba* as cultural texts that speak to each other across time, language, and ideology.

For the objective of this current study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. How do T. S. Eliot and Faiz Ahmed Faiz reconfigure the poetic self in response to the disintegration of cultural and ideological structures in the twentieth century?

2. In what ways do the urban landscapes in the poetry of Eliot and Faiz function as metaphors for modern alienation, exile, and socio-political disillusionment?

3. How do intertextual references, historical memory, and myth function as tools of both disruption and reconstruction in the poetic works of Eliot and Faiz?

### Literature Review

T.S. Eliot's position within Western modernist discourse has long been established through extensive critical engagement. Scholars such as Cleanth Brooks (1947) emphasize the structural cohesion within *The Waste Land*, interpreting its fragmented form as a deliberate aesthetic strategy that conveys spiritual disillusionment. Michael Levenson (1986) describes Eliot as a "poet of rupture," whose work embodies the collapse of cultural and philosophical certainties in the aftermath of World War I. His use of myth, allusion, and intertextuality has also been widely noted, particularly for how it reflects the fractured self and the search for meaning in a spiritually bankrupt world (North, 2001; Childs, 2000).

While Western scholarship has traditionally centered on Eliot's metaphysical concerns and narrative fragmentation, modernist Urdu poetry, particularly that of Faiz Ahmed Faiz, is frequently explored in a different context—one rooted in political struggle, exile, and postcolonial resistance. Victor Kiernan (1971) was among the first to introduce Faiz to the Anglophone world, highlighting how Faiz employed traditional poetic forms to express contemporary social crises. Faiz's *Dast-e-Saba*, for instance, expresses themes of alienation and loss that echo modernist sensibilities, albeit through the lens of colonial trauma and political repression.

Recent scholarship has begun to recognize Faiz's alignment with modernist aesthetics. Rakhshanda Jalil (2014) assert that Faiz utilizes fragmentation and symbolic ambiguity to convey both individual and collective despair. Jahanzeb, Jahan, and Shahzadi (2023) further argue that Faiz's poetic rupture is not merely emotional or aesthetic but a conscious resistance to totalitarian structures. This places his work in critical dialogue with modernist writers like Eliot, who also depict spiritual and existential crises, though rooted in different socio-historical conditions.

Despite thematic overlaps between Eliot and Faiz—particularly in their treatment of alienation, disillusionment, and the disintegrating self—comparative scholarship remains limited. Susan Friedman (2006) critiques the Eurocentrism of traditional modernist studies and calls for the inclusion of “multiple modernities” that emerged across decolonizing societies. In a similar vein, Bashir (2015) advocates for a comparative reading of Eliot and Faiz to uncover parallel modernist expressions shaped by unique historical pressures. However, most critical studies continue to explore these poets in isolation, missing the opportunity to interrogate how their work reflects a global condition of modernist fragmentation.

This gap highlights the necessity of a cross-cultural and comparative approach. By analyzing *The Waste Land* and *Dast-e-Saba* within a shared framework of identity fragmentation, this research contributes to both Eliot and Faiz scholarship. It brings into focus how differing cultural histories can produce similar poetic responses to modernity, expanding the boundaries of literary modernism beyond the West and foregrounding the interconnectedness of global literary expressions.

## Findings and Discussion

### Fragmentation and the Crisis of Self

Modernism is often characterized by a rupture in the continuity of the self—a splintering of identity under the pressure of historical and psychological disillusionment. In both *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot and *Dast-e-Saba* by Faiz Ahmed Faiz, this fragmentation of self is expressed through poetic form, language, and subjectivity. Although the two poets emerge from distinct geopolitical and cultural frameworks—Eliot from a war-torn Europe and Faiz from a colonized, post-Partition South Asia—their depiction of the fractured individual reflects a shared modernist consciousness. This section delves into how both poets use fragmentation to articulate a crisis of identity, employing a comparative framework grounded in psychoanalytic and postcolonial theories.

In *The Waste Land*, the self is not a unified subject but a series of disjointed voices. The poem opens with a personal yet ambiguous confession: “April is the cruellest month, breeding / Lilacs out of the dead land...” (Eliot, 1922, lines 1–2).

The speaker's identity remains unstable throughout, shifting from the narrator of these lines to other figures such as Madame Sosostris, the typist, Tiresias, and the drowned Phoenician sailor. This multiplicity illustrates what Levenson (1986) calls the “dissolution of a coherent selfhood” in modernist literature (p. 84). Eliot's fragmented narrative can be read as an embodiment of Freud's model of the psyche, particularly the conflict between the conscious ego and the repressed unconscious. The speakers in *The Waste Land* appear haunted by memory, guilt, and unfulfilled desire, often slipping between coherence and collapse.

The line “I will show you fear in a handful of dust” (Eliot, 1922, line 30) captures this internal disintegration. Dust becomes a symbol not only of mortality but also of the psychological residue of trauma, which need to be coped well (Akram & Oteir, 2025; Akram & Abdelrady, 2023, 2025; Ramzan et al., 2025, 2023, 2021). According to Brooks (1960), this kind of imagery reflects a deeper emotional paralysis where memory and meaning fail to cohere. The poem's intertextual complexity—Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, and biblical references—further dissolves any stable narrative center, replacing it with what Baudelaire called “the abyss of modern life.” The speaker is continually destabilized by the weight of cultural memory, history, and myth.

Faiz's *Dast-e-Saba* engages a similar fragmentation, but with a key difference: the crisis of self in Faiz is deeply entangled with exile and collective trauma. The poem is structured as an address to the breeze, a messenger who traverses the political and geographical distances that exile imposes. The opening lines—“Mujh se pehli si mohabbat mere mehboob na maang” (Do not ask of me, my love, the love I once had for you)—already signal a rupture: between past and present, between personal desire and historical responsibility. The speaker confesses his emotional exhaustion, not from romantic disillusionment alone but from witnessing suffering on a national scale. The self is fragmented under the pressure of political betrayal and ideological defeat.

Unlike Eliot, whose speaker disintegrates into mythic fragments, Faiz's fragmentation retains an ethical center. As Jahan and Akram (2022) note, “Faiz's subjectivity is fractured but not dissolved; it becomes a medium for articulating the silence



imposed by authoritarianism” (p. 106). His poem thus performs what Homi Bhabha (1994) describes as “the location of culture” – where hybrid identity emerges through resistance and negotiation rather than assimilation. In this sense, the breeze (saba) in Faiz’s poem is not just a romantic metaphor but a symbol of transhistorical witness, an entity that carries the burden of suppressed voices.

Moreover, the symbolic use of nature in Faiz’s poem—breeze, garden, flowers—is not purely aesthetic; it stands in contrast to the sterility of Eliot’s “waste land.” Where Eliot’s landscape is barren, Faiz’s retains the potential for renewal, however uncertain. The “garden” becomes a contested space: both a memory of love and a reminder of lost ideals. This tension reflects the postcolonial condition described by Fanon (1961), in which the colonized subject grapples with the simultaneous erosion and preservation of identity.

While both Eliot and Faiz write in different linguistic traditions—English and Urdu respectively—their poetic forms mimic psychological fragmentation. Eliot’s collage technique, abrupt scene changes, and multilingual insertions simulate the fractured psyche. Similarly, Faiz employs enjambment, repetition, and layered imagery to convey emotional and political fracture. The difference lies in the resolution. Eliot ends with a fragmented Sanskrit benediction: “Shantih shantih shantih”—a longing for peace that remains ambiguous. Faiz’s fragmentation, on the other hand, gestures toward return, to a homeland not as a physical space but as a dream of justice.

In both poets, then, the self is no longer a stable site of meaning but a fractured field. Yet Eliot’s fragmentation is metaphysical, rooted in spiritual desolation and cultural disinheritance. Faiz’s is postcolonial—rooted in exile, historical injustice, and resistance. Their poetic fragmentation reflects not only personal crisis but collective historical trauma, making both poets emblematic of a broader modernist rupture in human experience.

### Urban Alienation and the Unreal City

Urban alienation is a prominent motif in modernist literature, signifying the individual’s estrangement within an increasingly mechanized,

impersonal world. In *The Waste Land*, T.S. Eliot presents the modern city as a dystopian landscape—overcrowded yet emotionally barren—where human connection is reduced to routine and fragmentation. In Faiz Ahmed Faiz’s *Daste-e-Saba*, the image of the city also looms large but from the standpoint of exile and longing; the city is both a physical space and a symbol of lost political ideals. This section examines how both poets depict the urban space as a metaphor for psychological dislocation, ideological conflict, and cultural crisis. Though shaped by different historical forces, both poetic worlds converge on a central insight: the city, once a center of civilization, has become a site of despair and disorientation.

Eliot’s “Unreal City,” referenced in *The Waste Land*, is perhaps one of the most iconic images of urban alienation in modernist poetry. In the section titled “The Burial of the Dead,” Eliot writes:

“Unreal City, Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,  
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,  
I had not thought death had undone so many.” (lines 60–63)

This passage evokes a city filled with lifeless figures, mechanical in their movement, ghost-like in their presence. The line “I had not thought death had undone so many” is borrowed from Dante’s *Inferno* (Canto III), drawing a direct parallel between modern London and the underworld. As Ricks (1988) observes, the citizens of Eliot’s city are “more spectral than substantial; they are spiritually dead though biologically alive” (p. 142). Their anonymity reflects the disintegration of communal bonds and the erosion of individual meaning in a post-industrial, post-war society.

The fog, a recurring symbol in modernist literature, deepens the motif of urban alienation. It represents not only physical obscurity but also moral and epistemological uncertainty. Eliot’s city is not merely “unreal” in an aesthetic sense; it is spiritually vacated, devoid of transcendence or rootedness. This disenchanted world aligns with Max Weber’s idea of the “disenchantment of the world” (*Entzauberung*), where rationalization strips life of mystery, emotion, and human warmth.

Faiz’s depiction of the city in *Daste-e-Saba*, though less literal, carries a similarly disillusioned tone. His poetic city—presumably Lahore or another

Pakistani urban center—becomes an emblem of distance and dispossession. Exiled from his homeland due to political persecution, Faiz addresses the city through the symbolic intermediary of the breeze:

“Ae saba, un se kehna Woh jo bhi kehna ho keh dena Magar itni baat hai, ke hum zinda hain”  
 (“O breeze, say to them / Whatever must be said, say it / But do say this: that I am still alive.”)

This image of mediated communication underscores the alienation of the speaker, who cannot speak directly to his homeland or his people. The city is at once intimate and inaccessible—a repository of memory, pain, and deferred hope. As Rakhshanda Jalil (2014) notes, “For Faiz, urban space is not merely physical; it is a psychic and political battleground where belonging is constantly negotiated and denied”. The act of addressing the breeze instead of another human being also reflects the isolation of the speaker. Where Eliot’s crowd is too dense and impersonal, Faiz’s world is defined by absence and exile. The city becomes a haunting presence—a reminder of broken promises, failed revolutions, and suppressed voices. This aligns with Said’s (2012) idea of “contrapuntal geography,” where space is layered with multiple, often conflicting narratives: colonial past, revolutionary hope, authoritarian repression. Eliot’s typist scene in “The Fire Sermon” deepens the theme of urban alienation by illustrating how even intimate human encounters are reduced to mechanical, joyless transactions. The woman “lays out a table” with “automatic hand,” and after a dull sexual encounter, “makes a welcome of indifference.” This is not just a critique of sexual mores but a reflection of how the city erodes emotional authenticity. Individuals in this space do not meet; they collide. As Kenner (1959) argues, Eliot portrays the city as “a vortex of failed contact, a site where language collapses and meaning evades” (p. 189).

Faiz’s cityscape is more infused with longing and memory than Eliot’s, but it is no less fragmented. In *Dast-e-Saba*, he refers to streets, doorways, and windows that once held meaning, now rendered mute by his absence. The breeze carries these images back to the speaker, but they do not offer solace—only a reminder of what is lost. The urban space, once familiar, has turned uncanny, a concept Freud (2018) described as “the return of the repressed in a familiar guise.” In Faiz, the city

haunts because it was once home; in Eliot, the city haunts because it has ceased to be human.

Moreover, both poets use **temporal disjunction** to heighten alienation. Eliot’s city exists in a collapsed time-space: medieval, classical, and contemporary voices coexist without harmony. Similarly, Faiz evokes a disjointed temporality where past hopes disrupt the present, and the future remains indefinitely postponed. In both cases, the city is not a linear narrative but a collage of emotional and ideological ruins.

Importantly, the political dimension of alienation is more explicit in Faiz than in Eliot. While Eliot’s city represents spiritual and cultural decay, Faiz’s speaks to censorship, imprisonment, and betrayal. The “unreal city” in *Dast-e-Saba* is one where the ideals of justice and liberty have been suffocated under the weight of tyranny. The silence of its streets is not just metaphysical—it is politically enforced. As Ahsan Ul Haq (2020) explains, “Faiz transforms personal exile into collective elegy, making the city a symbol of both oppression and memory”.

Thus, both poets converge in portraying the modern city as a fractured, alienating space. Yet their treatments differ in emphasis: Eliot focuses on metaphysical dislocation and cultural despair, while Faiz concentrates on political exile and historical loss. One critiques the decadence of Western modernity; the other mourns the unfulfilled promises of postcolonial liberation. In both cases, however, the city becomes the central stage upon which the fragmented self performs its solitude.

### Myth, Memory, and the Echoes of Civilization

The invocation of myth and memory in modernist literature serves as a counterweight to fragmentation and alienation (Ramzan & Alahmadi, 2024; Ramzan & Khan, 2019). In *The Waste Land*, T.S. Eliot famously employs a vast intertextual tapestry of classical, Biblical, Eastern, and literary references, constructing a poetic palimpsest where ancient civilizations are not merely remembered but eerily reanimated in a decaying modern world. Faiz Ahmed Faiz, while rooted in a postcolonial and Marxist tradition, similarly resurrects cultural memory—Islamic, Persian, and revolutionary—to preserve a sense of continuity and resistance amid historical trauma and political disillusionment. Both poets treat memory not as nostalgia, but as a moral and

artistic imperative: to rescue significance from the ruins, and to resist the obliteration of meaning in times of crisis.

Eliot's use of myth is at once encyclopedic and ironic. He layers his poem with allusions to The Grail legend, Tiresias, Buddhist scripture, and Shakespeare, establishing a dialogue between past and present. The famous lines from "What the Thunder Said"—"Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata."—are drawn from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, suggesting that Eastern wisdom might offer spiritual renewal where Western civilization has failed. As Weston (1997) notes in her influential work *From Ritual to Romance*, which Eliot heavily relied on, myths like the Grail Quest originally functioned as regenerative rituals. Eliot repurposes these fragments in *The Waste Land* to signify a civilization that has lost its ritual center. As he puts it:

"These fragments I have shored against my ruins." (line 430)

Here, fragments become not a symptom of collapse but a form of salvage—memory operating as both testimony and strategy. According to Brooks (2018), Eliot uses myth not merely to escape the present but to confront it through historical depth: "In retrieving the forms of past cultures, Eliot enacts a resistance to the entropy of the modern condition" (p. 91).

Faiz, unlike Eliot, does not appropriate myth for aesthetic detachment but reclaims it for political resistance **and** historical consciousness. His poems in *Dast-e-Saba* and other collections summon Islamic, Persian, and Indo-Muslim motifs not as lost glories but as continuous legacies. For example, in his frequent invocations of figures like **Mansur Hallaj**, **Majnun**, or **Yazid**, Faiz subtly aligns the personal pain of the poet with collective suffering and spiritual endurance. In the poem *Nisar Mein Teri Galiyon Pe*, he evokes the streets of his homeland as sacred and blood-stained, referencing a mythicized geography of martyrdom.

Memory in Faiz is revolutionary. His famous line—"We shall witness the day that has been promised" (*Hum Dekhenge*)—functions as a prophetic utterance steeped in Quranic cadence. As Hashmi (2008) writes, "Faiz's poetry draws on cultural and spiritual memory to articulate a vision of justice that outlives both tyranny and time" (p. 108). This act of remembering becomes an act of political defiance. Even in exile, the poet

does not forget the symbolic geography of resistance: the prisons, the streets, the comrades lost—all are etched into verse.

Eliot's approach to cultural memory is more skeptical and tragic. His inclusion of Sybil's epigraph—"I want to die"—suggests that even the seers of old are weary of history's burden. Yet, he cannot abandon the past; his poem is haunted by it. Every line of *The Waste Land* echoes with another text, another voice, another civilization. As critics like Levenson (1986) have noted, this intertextual density is Eliot's way of both mourning and preserving: "Modernism in Eliot is the formalization of mourning—the past is not simply lost; it is recited, curated, ironically remembered" (p. 167).

In contrast, Faiz's intertextuality is less ironic, more affirming. He does not quote to show distance but to show allegiance. When he invokes *Diwan-e-Hafiz* or Iqbal, it is to stitch his verse into a continuous cloth of resistance and moral imagination. Memory becomes the poet's weapon, a means of refusing erasure. In the face of dictatorship and censorship, to remember is to remain politically and spiritually alive.

Where Eliot's fragments seek to **shore up meaning** from cultural collapse, Faiz's fragments serve to **reconstruct solidarity** in the face of systemic repression. Both poets recognize that myth and memory alone cannot redeem the present, but they also understand that without them, poetry becomes unmoored. As Ricoeur (2004) argues in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, cultural memory is essential for ethical identity: "To be human is to be answerable to what has been, even when it wounds" (p. 233).

The tonal contrast between the two poets also merits attention. Eliot's mythopoetic voice is elegiac, cerebral, and sometimes sardonic. His allusions do not seek to restore belief but to dramatize its absence. Faiz, by contrast, uses cultural memory to **mobilize emotion, fortify resolve, and resurrect belief**. In this sense, Eliot's poetry reflects a **modernist despair**, while Faiz's reflects a **postcolonial hope**. Yet both recognize the poet's duty as a kind of archivist—one who speaks across time, ensuring that the fragments of civilization do not vanish into silence.

In sum, myth and memory in Eliot and Faiz function as parallel but distinct strategies. One mourns the death of tradition; the other uses tradition to challenge the death of freedom. One

recycles cultural ruins; the other rekindles cultural fire. In both, we find an ethics of remembering that challenges the present's forgetfulness—an insistence that the echoes of civilization still matter, even if they come to us faint, fractured, or in exile.

### Language and Voice as Instruments of Political and Spiritual Expression

Language in modernist and postcolonial poetry is never neutral—it becomes a battlefield for ideology, emotion, memory, and resistance. Both T.S. Eliot and Faiz Ahmed Faiz display acute awareness of the **materiality and moral weight of language**, though their approaches and historical contexts differ vastly. Where Eliot's verse often dissects the **inarticulateness and spiritual sterility** of the modern Western condition, Faiz uses language to **revive the silenced, inspire the oppressed, and consecrate resistance**. Yet, in both poets, language becomes a **medium of truth-seeking**, navigating the liminal space between silence and utterance, repression and revelation.

#### A. Eliot: The Collapse of Language and the Struggle for Expression

In *The Waste Land*, language is fragmented, multilingual, and unstable. The poem moves erratically between English, German, Italian, Sanskrit, and even nursery rhymes, illustrating not just cultural fragmentation but also a **crisis of voice**. This polyglossia doesn't serve clarity—it enacts confusion, miscommunication, and a sense of spiritual and cultural dislocation. For instance, the infamous line:

"A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,  
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief." (lines 22–23)

Here, Eliot dramatizes the **inadequacy of language** to provide coherence or comfort in a desolate world. As Perloff (1990) argues, Eliot's style is "deliberately discontinuous," foregrounding the **epistemological instability** of modern existence. The narrator(s) often shift abruptly, and it is never clear who is speaking, or to whom—a technique that reflects the breakdown of communal voice and personal identity.

Tiresias, who claims to "see and know all," is both male and female, living and dead, thereby reinforcing the sense that language and identity

are **fluid, broken, haunted**. In the final section of *The Waste Land*, even the thunder must be interpreted through ancient scripture—a reflection of how modern man has become deaf to meaning. Language, thus, is not a bridge but a **barrier**, requiring decoding rather than communion.

#### B. Faiz: Language as Solidarity, Struggle, and Sacred Utterance

In contrast, Faiz Ahmed Faiz transforms the **very tools of lyricism and classical metaphor** into instruments of radical expression. He does not abandon poetic tradition; he **weaponizes it**. His Urdu, often interspersed with Persianized diction and Sufi symbolism, is richly allusive, yet never elitist. It evokes shared griefs, shared battles. The voice in Faiz is anchored, declarative, and often communal, embodying the poet as both **witness and warrior**. In *Bol* ("Speak"), he urges:

"Speak, for your lips are free;  
Speak, your tongue is still yours."

This is not just a plea for poetic articulation—it is an act of **political defiance**. As Rahman (1991) notes, "Faiz reclaims the poetic voice not as personal catharsis but as collective conscience" (p. 203). The rhythm, metaphor, and classical ghazal structure become vessels not for escapism, but for engagement.

Unlike Eliot's cryptic allusions, Faiz's intertextuality and metaphors are mobilized to **decode oppression**. For instance, the beloved in Faiz is rarely just a romantic figure; she becomes the nation, the people, the dream of justice. In *Mujh Se Pehli Si Mohabbat*, Faiz writes:

"Ab aur kya dile-naadaan tujh se kaho  
Jo kuchh kaha hai, woh log the jo gaye..."

This shift from personal love to collective grief illustrates how Faiz redefines poetic **subjectivity**—not inward, but outward; not detached, but immersed. Language, here, is **charged with moral urgency**.

#### C. Form and Rhythm as Semantic Devices

Eliot's formal innovations—free verse, enjambments, erratic rhythms—are not mere aesthetic choices. They mirror the **psychic disintegration** of modern man. The deliberate collapse of traditional meters and coherent stanzas becomes a stylistic equivalent of spiritual despair. As Cleanth Brooks (1960) observed, Eliot's poetry achieves meaning not through



narrative but through juxtaposition, irony, and ambiguity—language constantly circling meaning without securing it.

Faiz, however, often adheres to traditional meters (behr) and forms (ghazal, nazm), which serve as cultural anchors. The rhythmic regularity of Faiz's verse, even when depicting suffering or violence, conveys a sense of **moral composure**—a defiance that refuses to let anguish distort articulation. Language becomes a site of aesthetic discipline and ethical strength.

#### D. Silences and What Cannot Be Said

Both poets use **silence** strategically. Eliot's silences are bleak, filled with the **horror of nothingness**—e.g., "I will show you fear in a handful of dust." Faiz's silences are often imposed by **political censorship**, yet they pulse with the unspoken. In *Zindan Nama*, composed in prison, Faiz uses metaphors of night, stone, and distance to **encode censored meanings**, making poetry itself a **resistance to silencing**.

According to Spivak (1988), the subaltern "cannot speak" within dominant discourses, yet Faiz creates a poetic space **where the subaltern does speak—eloquently and defiantly**. His language becomes both testimony and prophecy.

#### Conclusion

This research has undertaken a comparative study of T. S. Eliot and Faiz Ahmed Faiz, poets who—despite differing in geography, language, and historical context—share a profound concern with the fragmentation of modern identity and cultural disintegration. Rooted in Anglo-European modernism and Urdu postcolonialism respectively, both poets articulate a consciousness of rupture, exile, and a yearning for cohesion in their works.

Through close textual analysis and theoretical framing in modernism, postcolonialism, and psychoanalysis, the study revealed that Eliot and Faiz write from spaces marked by cultural and spiritual dislocation. Eliot's poetry, especially *The Waste Land*, conveys the existential despair of post-World War I Europe through fragmented narrative voices, nonlinear time, and dense allusions. His work captures a civilization in moral decline, where religion and tradition no longer offer grounding. In contrast, Faiz responds to the trauma of colonialism, partition, and authoritarianism. His poetry channels personal

sorrow into collective resistance, portraying suffering as political and often redemptive. Unlike Eliot's retreat into esotericism, Faiz maintains lyrical clarity and revolutionary urgency.

Despite differing methods and ideologies, both poets employ memory, myth, and intertextuality to grapple with cultural breakdown. Eliot invokes classical texts, religious ritual, and Eastern philosophy to reconstruct meaning amidst chaos, while Faiz draws on Islamic history, Sufi mysticism, Persian imagery, and Marxist thought to reclaim cultural identity and language from colonial legacies. Their respective uses of intertextuality reveal poetry as a repository of cultural memory and a tool for resistance.

Time is a central concern in both oeuvres. Eliot presents time as fractured—a coexistence of past and present that signifies stasis and spiritual paralysis. His speakers hover in a liminal space between memory and despair. Faiz, however, reconfigures temporality as a force of political hope. His poems grieve past injustices but look forward to a future of justice and return, making time a site of possibility rather than paralysis.

The motif of the city further illustrates their contrasting visions. Eliot's "Unreal City" embodies alienation and mechanical existence—a symbol of spiritual decay. Faiz's cities, though scarred by violence and exile, retain emotional resonance and potential for solidarity. Where Eliot mourns a lifeless urban wasteland, Faiz's cities pulse with memory, defiance, and the dream of reclamation.

Language and voice emerge as crucial differentiators. Eliot's polyphonic, fragmented technique enacts the modernist crisis of meaning, reflecting the breakdown of coherent identity. His multilingual pastiche destabilizes singular truth. Faiz's voice, while metaphorically rich, remains accessible and grounded in communal dialogue. His poetry carries an ethical commitment to its audience—a postcolonial insistence on inclusion and shared struggle.

Ultimately, this study highlights how literature operates not only as a mirror of crisis but also as a site for negotiating meaning. Both Eliot and Faiz write in the wake of civilizational trauma—Eliot amid Europe's spiritual desolation, Faiz amid the political unrest of postcolonial South Asia. Yet each turns to poetry to reconstruct the self and reimagine community. Eliot's mythic

method and Faiz's revolutionary romanticism respond to a shared human need to locate meaning in a fractured world.

This comparative inquiry contributes to global modernist and postcolonial studies by bridging the apparent divide between Western and non-Western poetic traditions. By placing Faiz alongside Eliot, we challenge the Eurocentrism of modernist discourse and reveal the richness of cross-cultural literary dialogues. Future research may expand this framework by including more non-Western poets whose works resonate with modernist aesthetics and by incorporating translation studies to explore how such poets are interpreted globally. Further analysis of how gender, class, and coloniality intersect in their works could deepen our understanding.

Eliot and Faiz, in distinct yet convergent ways, compel us to confront the ruptures of modernity while affirming poetry's power to remember, resist, and reimagine. Their works stand as enduring testaments to literature's role in bearing witness to loss and asserting the possibility of renewal..

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