

**Tribhuvan University**

**Absolute Irony and Despairing Vision in Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* and  
T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land***

**A Thesis Submitted to**

**the Central Department of English, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,**

**University Campus, Tribhuvan University**

**in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Mater of Philosophy**

**in English**

**Shree Prasad Tyataju**

**TU Registration No.: 6-1-20-300-97**

**Campus Roll No.: 2070/071/026**

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**Tribhuvan University**

**Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**

**Central Department of English**

**Master of Philosophy in English**

Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Shree Prasad Tyataju has completed his dissertation entitled “**Absolute Irony and Despairing Vision in Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* and T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land***” under my supervision. I hereby recommend this dissertation be submitted for viva voce.

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Prof. Dr. Beerendra Pandey

August 2018

**Tribhuvan University**  
**Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Central Department of English**  
**Master of Philosophy in English**

Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled **Absolute Irony and Despairing Vision in Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* and T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*** submitted by Mr. Shree Prasad Tyataju to the Department of English, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University Campus, Tribhuvan University, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee:

Members of the Research Committee

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(Prof. Dr. Beerendra Pandey)

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Research Supervisor

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External Examiner

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Head

Central Department of English

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Date

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Shree Prasad Tyataju

## Abstract

This dissertation attempts to apply Alan Wilde's concept of absolute irony to two quintessential modernist texts – Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* and T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. In *Horizons of Assent*, Wilde discusses about crisis in modernist aesthetics. According to him, this is the crisis of unresolved irony that modernist texts use as a central trope or consciousness. He names such a modernist use of irony as absolute irony. When applied to Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, it becomes clear that Mann ironizes the tendency to be sexually immoral and yet the irony does not condemn it so that ambivalence remains even in the ending of the novella. For Eliot, the modernist landscape without morality and faith – which he ironizes – remains a waste land till the end because the rain never falls. The paradox of death-in-life, which the use of absolute irony gives rise to, in *The Waste Land* remains unresolved. So, the dissertation concludes that Alan Wilde's theory of absolute irony applies quite well to Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* and T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and that it comes out as a defining characteristic of modernist aesthetics.

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