



Revival of the Modern World: A Study through Eliot's *The Waste Land*

Aishwarya Kumari

Assistant Professor Jaipur National University, Jaipur.

Abstract

The article aims to study the loss of spirituality and a distorted world, post -world war through T.S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land*. It depicts the destruction of the modern mind and lust over fear in a monologue narration. There is no fixed place or time to maintain consistency in the narrative technique. How the people have overcome the devastating state and have accepted peace in ignoring

the world. T.S. Eliot has used Buddha's and Augustine's references to show the decline of culture and traditions. He is known as a prominent poet, and writer to depict the conflict occurring in the modern age. This article attempts to appeal to the harsh reality of a modern culture that is leading toward destruction. It captures rhetorical questions in various ways for the readers. It will conclude on a note that how people are ignoring the principle of transcendentalism and are following an aimless direction.

Keywords: The Wasteland, Buddha's, Augustine, transcendentalism, culture, tradition.

Introduction

T.S. Eliot is one of the renowned figures recognized mainly as a poet of war. He very keenly observed the problems of the modern age and illustrated the real image of the crisis time known as the 'Age of Worry'. He could predict the near future sufferings post world war. Eliot was connected to the existing time like a bird's eye by applying the 'mythical method'. He tried connecting the existing instances to setbacks of historical times particularly before middle-ages. He questions to the modern age and humankind in the poem 'The Waste Land'. Exposing a picture of dull wasteland that symbolically suggests the spiritual death of modern men, lack of love, passion for sex, etc, Eliot search for the remedy to this awful act.

He explores regeneration and hopefulness seems far-fetched. It portrays a world that confirms anxiety, tension, subjugation of women, depression unrest above all an extreme decay of morality non-hygienic environment. The quandary and predicament of modern life have led many literary figures to the postwar disillusionment of the 1920s to voice out. T.S. Eliot is one of the indifferent poets of war who voiced in depicting the crisis of the post-world war also known as the 'Age of worry'. His revolutionary

poem, *The Waste Land* (1922) is no more than an earthquake that deconstructs the edifice of modernism and everything it presented.

It portrays a claustrophobic world where regeneration and hope seem far-fetched. This 'disease of the age' becomes the core issue of the poem. Eliot follows the 'mythical method' in the poem and connects existing panoramic setbacks of modern life to antiquities. Thus, it implies a reproachful question on modernism. Eliot scrutinizes the spiritual death of a modern man and symbolizes Wasteland an ordinary place where only temporary relations are shared. He searches for a fruitful remedy through the poem and voices for the degradation of mankind. Eliot is enthralling for spiritual regeneration and preaches the beliefs of Lord Buddha and Saint Augustin.

*"Burning burning burning burning O Lord Thou pluckest me
out*

O Lord Thou pluckest"

The Fire Sermon (308-310),

The Waste Land

The poem *Waste Land* gives various facets of the modern world and how it got spoiled post world war. He then highlights the belief of Lord Buddha and Saint Augustin on spiritual regeneration and suggests not lamenting over the materialistic world including women as they are the distractions. The above phrase has been taken from the third section of the poem 'The Fire Sermon' and it makes us visualize first hellfire but later it reveals the passion for sexuality, lust, and worldly pleasure. This title is an allusion to the spiritual teaching of Buddha, who suggested people resist worldly appetites for money, power, sex, chastity, or any materialistic world, unlike a Christian belief. This approach toward one's life can transcend into a peaceful world.

Eliot personally started giving thought to the idea of asceticism, to pursue a life of spiritual enlightenment and avoided all forms of

tolerance. If today's Western culture is any indication, though, Eliot might have lost that battle.

"But at my back in a cold blast, I hear

The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear". (185-186)

The Fire Sermon,

The Waste Land

These lines are allusions taken from Andrew Marvell's "To his coy Mistress". Marvell reverberates with the Waste Land and laments the desert as eternity, woman's integrity goes into dust, and the narrator's passion for intimacy into ashes. The indulgence of sex has destroyed, damaged, and destructed the modern world. The poem highlights the hopelessness, disillusionment, pessimism, and failure of modern contemporary life. People are losing faith in each other and have made everything awful and temporary. "The Waste Land is an expedition of human failure and of perennial quest for salvation" (Bhagawati 337). T.S. Eliot silently weeps over the loss of humankind and expresses how this land has turned into waste. Thus, Eliot looks forward to the revival of the Renaissance in light of the misery of the West. Observing to visualize the rebirth of modern lives. (Hentea 317-18). Eliot highlights the teaching of Buddha and Augustine in the opening of the poem and inculcates the emotional and spiritual crisis. A woman with magical powers who ages but never dies visions people's future. The poet forcefully lives in a culture that is already withered and decayed. The Waste Land majorly focuses on the narrative of Fisher King. It is believed that either King or his soldier assaulted the holy chapel into his inability and the nakedness of his country. Fisher King has been depicted as the state of modern culture. Eliot's world has no space to heal the act of Fisher King perhaps there is no existence of Fisher King at all.

The first section of *The Burial of the Dead* can be examined as a modified dramatic monologue where the four speakers were tagged by deceased people and captive by instances like wars. In this case, though April is not the happy month of pilgrimages and storytelling. It is instead the time when the land should be regenerating a long winter: It is almost like the problems of Eliot's other bore inevitably who could not interconnect with the world around him. It opens with a reference to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

*"April is the cruelest month, breeding Lilacs out of the dead
land, mixing Memory and desire stirring*

Winter kept us warm"

Marie's childhood recollections are also painful: The simple world of cousins sledding, and coffee in the park has been replaced by a complex set of emotional and political consequences resulting from the war. But for the people, modern world regeneration is painful, for, it brings back reminders of a more fertile and happier past. In the modern world, winter, the time of forgetfulness and members, is indeed preferable. The first woman is associated by allusion with Cleopatra or Dedo, two great queens who committed suicide for love. The second women's lie has created everything the right way yet she is being punished by her body like married and supporting her soldier husband, and born children. The two women in the second section of the poem represent the two sides of modern sexuality; white one side of this sexuality is ban and self-destruction, and the other is rampant sex life associated with a lack of culture and rapid aging.

Interestingly, this section ends with a line echoing Ophelia's suicide speech in "Hamlet" which links lie to the woman in the first section of the poem, who has also been compared to famous female suicides, the regenerative quality is lacking in these women because they have not been able to have meaningful relationships simply because they don't know.

The opening two stanzas of "The Fire Sermon" describe the ultimate "wasteland" as Eliot sees it:

"Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

*Shantih shantih shantih" What the Thunder Said (433-434),
The Waste Land*

This poem is Eliot's most hopeful. Now that we have lost our cultural memory, Eliot asks if we may learn spiritual knowledge from other cultures. In the final lines, Eliot quotes six Upanishads, Hindu spiritual literature. Giving, compassion and self-control are the first three words, while Shantih, which means "peace beyond all understanding," is repeated three times. There is no struggle in "The Waste Land" that really gets behind the idea of overcoming the individual ego, giving up any drive for individual greatness, and living a life of peace and compassion.

Eliot intended "The Waste Land" as one of the greatest modern poems. The piece also deals with modernism and the loss of high culture and great art. Even as he wrote this, Eliot's vision of utopia was fading fast. Even the most attentive readers may find the poem puzzling. As a result, many readers are turned off by Eliot's renowned literary representation mentioned in numerous civilizations and languages. A variety of works formed a "collage of literary pieces to create the feeling of speaking for a whole civilization in crisis," according to Pericles Lewis. A dying tradition was revived when Eliot challenged the audience to critique the poem. To confront current issues such as war, industrialization, abortion, and urban life, while yet participating in a literary tradition, is how Lewis describes poets today. There is a significant message hidden in *The Waste Land's* coded language.

The poem has been composed into five parts and each part contains different speakers, time, and locations. The poem quickly leaves behind even the most skilled reader as Eliot seamlessly makes his transitions. The opening of the poem is called "*The Burial of The Dead*" and is seemingly the easiest to follow. However, the tone is

sober as there is continuously referencing to death and rebirth. Nature is used as a vehicle to explain the endless cycle which seems to exhaust the speaker. Section one dives into deep childhood memories that show a clear yearning due to unmet desires. Yet even this portion that initially is simple to follow shifts into what appears to be a completely different work.

The poem is divided into five sections, each with its own speaker, time, and place. Even the most seasoned reader will be left behind as Eliot fluidly adapts. The poem's first section, "The Burial of the Dead," is the most straightforward. The tone is solemn due to the constant mention of death and rebirth. Nature is used to explain the speaker's exhausting cycle. Section one delves into childhood memories of unfulfilled dreams. But even this simple-to-follow piece transforms into what appears to be a whole different work.

The method of assembling "fragments" or "broken images" from the past into a sort of mosaic allows him at once to suggest parallels between contemporary problems and earlier historical situations and to disorient the reader, turning the reading process into a model of modern, urban confusion. It parallels the cubist use of collage, calling attention to the linguistic texture of the poem itself and to the material.

Like Matthew Arnold and Theodor W. Adorno, Eliot valued thoughtfulness and appreciation of culture and art. The poem expresses Eliot's fears of cultural and moral decline or degeneration. He is expressing his displeasure with his post-WWII surroundings. *The Waste Land* expresses his feelings about the barren earth. 'No conventional structures of authority or belief, merely 'soil that may not be favorable to fresh growth' (Lewis). Section five of the poem ties to the first section's topics. Eliot:

*"There is not even silence in the mountains
But dry sterile
thunder without rain*

There is not even solitude in the mountains" (ll 341–343)

Eliot used a number of images and events to explore the characters in different places. Just after the sound of a bird, the weather changes and it starts to rain bringing back life to the mountains. Eliot then shifts the place and narrator to the Ganges from the dry mountains. It reveals the traditional approach to what the Thunder said. Eliot brings in the three D's to elaborate on the traditional aspect. The first 'D' implies Datta meaning to give, the second 'D' talks about Dayadvam meaning to sympathize and the third 'D' signify Damyata meaning to control. These references have been taken from Hindu Upanishad and urge the reader to follow the three D's and should evoke peace within themselves. The three D's should be practiced by people to avoid the materialistic world. The practice would turn into meditation to believe within themselves.

Conclusion

The article concludes by indicating metaphors to describe moral decay. Eliot's writing style is distinctive, contrasting popular culture with ancient culture to confuse the reader. Only a few are meant to comprehend the splintered work which is profoundly arrogant. Eliot uses his literary knowledge to discuss humanity's demise due to greed and the craving for instant gratification. Eliot may be speaking directly to the public or to no one. His message would likely be lost on deaf or hard-of-hearing ears. His literary style is current, with varied imagery, character change, and purposeful fragmentation. All of these methods are utilized to express his moral reservations. A dismal future full of culture that now "impresses the same stamp on everything" (Adorno) replaced Thomas Eliot's Utopia. Sexual gratification is the major problem for the degeneration of the modern world. The paper leaves a gap for the reader to acknowledge the transcendentalism theory that is ignored in Eliot's poem. The future scholar can discover individualism in the modernist poem *The Waste Land*.

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Ms. Aishwarya Kumari

Ms. Aishwarya Kumari is currently teaching in Jaipur National University, Jaipur as an Assistant Professor in School of Languages, Literature & Society. Her teaching specialization includes-Women and film studies, American Literature and psychoanalysis Theory. She is also an expert counsellor and looks forward to deal with psychological difficulties amongst children.

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