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Khulna, Bangladesh

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Special Issue

**International Seminar on the Centennial Celebration of
T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land***



Government Brajalal College
Khulna, Bangladesh

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A Peer Reviewed Journal

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Editor's Note

The current issue of *BL College Journal* is a special one taking in sixteen scholarly research papers presented on a two-day international seminar arranged by the Department of English, Government Brajalal College, Khulna, Bangladesh on 24-25 September 2023 on the occasion of Centennial Celebration of *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot. It was attended by 34 academics and research scholars online and onsite from Bangladesh, India, and Nepal. All the papers on diverse themes like modern malaise, emotional alienation, spiritual barrenness, moral degradation, cultural decay, existential crisis, psychic disintegration, loss of traditional values, disillusionment and despair of the post-war generation, spiritual salvation, etc. hold deep insight and scholarship of the contributors.

The research papers also offer an eco-critical approach, psychoanalytic viewpoint, feministic approach, and introspective analyses from several interdisciplinary perspectives. In addition to focusing on its multi-faceted embedded meanings, the studies explore Eliot's masterfully interwoven experimental linguistic innovations, inter-textual highbrow references, cryptic symbols, multi-mythological literary allusions, kaleidoscopic narrative style, objective co-relative and stream-of-consciousness technique in the poem.

Any study today of a literary work published one hundred years ago may be understood as an undertaking in archival research, but the changes in the field of literary studies have been so cataclysmic in the last quarter of the twentieth century that reading *The Waste Land* feels a lot like stepping back in time. Since the poem remains a social barometer, it invites responses from each generation of readers revealing the values of that generation. The centennial celebration of *The Waste Land* was a good moment to register its continuing capacity to generate a shock of recognition by the speakers and participants who presented papers. A young team of teachers from the Department of English consisting of Shima Chowdhury, Md. Harun Ur Rashid and Joydeb Datta headed by Roxana Khanom, Head-in-charge did a lot to ease the burden of editing and proofreading the papers selected for publication on the editor's behalf. I truly do recognize their contributions and am thankful to them.

I, once again, extend my sincere appreciation to everyone who has contributed to this journal. We look forward to embarking on this remarkable journey together and witnessing the growth and success of *BL College Journal*.

Professor Sharif Atiquzzaman
Editor

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Chromatic Symbolism in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*

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Abstract

T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) employs colors to depict various shades of emotions of the post-World War I in Europe in his 'The Waste Land' (1922). On the one hand, the poetic treatment of colors indicates the plight of the world; on the other, the colors embody the myths of the ancient world and help deepen the meaning of the text. The poetic genius employs Tiresias as the persona who can travel through time and space bringing together different hues of the world into a single collage. Eliot's choice of color reveals to the modern audience the deeper schema that he builds to represent the devastated state of Europe after World War I. Having lived the life of both a woman and a man, the protagonist has been blessed with the power to foresee things despite his blindness. The seer weaves a garland of colors in 'The Waste Land' to represent the damage the War had in the soul of the people, in the value system of the society, and in the changing socio-political reality of the time. In this paper, I contend that Eliot uses color symbolism in the poem to enforce the modernist ethos of the fragmented world where the lynchpins are missing. Through close reading of the text, I analyse the language to arrive at the conclusion that Eliot's use of colors reveals a whole, new spectrum of meanings.

Keywords

Chromatic symbolism, Modernism, Fragmentation, Poetics of colors

Introduction

Review of Related Literature

T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) has stood as a masterpiece in English poetry and drawn the critical attention of many critics over the period of a century. The critics have read and interpreted the text from multiple viewpoints. Approaching him from the historical point of view, Matthew Hart explores the historical significance of the text and the poet. He writes: "Eliot's 'once there was a culture here,' should remind us that *The Waste Land's* tragedy of unreconciled voices is not just a phenomenological problem: it is a metic's political reaction to the post-1918 crisis in European national cultures, involving the sense that the home of homes is burning down the house" (184). For Hart, the poem refers to the reflection of a wise man on the changing historical circumstances. Like Hart, Olga Soboleva and Angus Wrenn also argue that the text was composed amid the changing circumstances in Europe. World War I was a huge force bringing about an impact of such magnitude. Soboleva and Wrenn state: 'Eliot's poem reflects European political events which were unfolding even as he drafted it' (285). The discussion on European modernism centers on the fragmentation of human society and explores similar themes in the poetry written in the age. In the modernist discourse, the poem occupies the celebrated position.

Also, other critics have discussed the themes of the journey of the hero and the quest for knowledge to overcome the problems that the people undergo in post-war Europe. The people suffer in the world, while the persona runs after the remedy of their suffering. Juan A. Suarez explores how Eliot sifts through the literary and intellectual archives of the West in search of a remedy. Suarez writes: 'As it runs through the length of the spectrum, the dial picks us some voices and frequencies while it skips others; the resulting collage is transcribed onto the page' (757). The allusions from the Bible, the Greek myths, and the Bhagvat indicate how desperate the poet is regarding the cure. Harry Levin explores the significance of the myth of the quest for the Holy Grail in the text in order to regain the lost Christian values in the poem as he notes, 'In that least heroic and most fragmentary of epics, he exorcized the blight of contemporaneous London by tracing through it the outline of a quest for the Holy Grail' (624). Such critics take *The Waste Land* as an attempt by the erudite poet to overcome the issues, resulting from the fragmentation of the modern world.

The past and its resources have lost their place in the life of the individual. The ahistoricity that rules the world has gnawed the creative potential of the people. As Brain Crews argues, 'This denies the individual's independence the past and past actions, although in *The Waste Land* rather than the individual we can think more in terms of a collective memory which holds everything together' (19). The collective memory of the people has stopped helping them. Therefore, Eliot alludes to the contemporary artists as much as the writers from the past. R. Galand reads Baudelaire's impact in his writings (32). Similarly, the contemplation of the long history of violence also gets its due place in Eliot's poetry as Sarah Cole argues, 'What a reading of *The Waste Land* shows, in part, is that literary modernism was fully entangled... but also with a long history of violence, that its works were grouped and polarized around the question of whether violence can stand as the bedrock of a culture's artistic accomplishments' (1633). Eliot captures the tension between historicity and ahistoricity in his masterpiece in order to explore the novel possibility of emancipation as such.

Methodology

The paper basically builds on the data derived through the close reading of the texts. Following the structural mode of linguistic interpretation of the texts, the paper attempts to dig deeper into the cultural landscape to seek out specific patterns of history in which the use of colors in the texts has been reflected in the post-war context. Also, I have taken references from similar kinds of studies done on fairy tales. For instance, Francisco Vaz da Silva's 2007 study works as a model in that he comparatively looks at European fairy tales to examine tricolor symbolism in them. Da Silva also argues that the use of color is culturally shaped as it reveals the mode of perceiving the social reality (250). Also, this study seeks the association between the color and specific allusions present in the poem.

Textual Analysis

T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) is fused with chromatic symbolism and the blind seer, Tiresias in order to balance two opposing poles of the post-war world. World War I brought about devastation in Europe as it was a war basically fought in Europe. The social institutions had ground into dust; the binding values were torn asunder into pieces, leaving the society without any lynchpin; and the foundation of the society was well shaken with the War. Eliot captures the ethos of his time by employing Tiresias as

the mouthpiece of the time as the poet was searching for a wholistic voice. The Greek mythical character turns into the voice of the modernist time; furthermore, the blind seer's observation of the modern world becomes even more intense when Eliot makes use of color to weave a narrative of the modern world. In absence of the light, both color and scenes do not make sense. The blind man relates to the world through colors right from the beginning of the poem. On the surface, it represents the larger contradiction of the modern world in which the absence of light and colors simultaneously move together. On a deeper level, the spiritual quest and revival of hope realize their potential in the use of colors in the tale that the blind man tells the world.

The poem begins with a host of colors immediately after the epigraph alluding to Sybil. Eliot uses Sybil as a recurring reference to refer to her need for death. 'A handful of dust' (30) implies the color of dryness and death: Sybil gets eternal life from the sun god, Apollo. She does not die, resulting in perpetual aging. This is the problem of the people in the modern world: death has become a luxury, while life offers only terror. So, Tiresias warns us: 'I will show you fear in a handful of dust' (30). Eliot's use of 'brown' remarkably alludes to the idea of death: 'the dead land' (2), 'Dull roots' (4), and 'dried tubers' (7) appear in the opening stanza to reinforce the idea of death since 'April is the cruellest month, breeding' (1) in the wasteland. Even though 'snow' (6) is white, the qualifier 'forgetful' (6) takes it to the same direction of death and decay as the common attribute of the land. As Vincent B. Leitch explains, Eliot treats the quest of Christ as the way of regeneration in his poetry (37). Tiresias's world is filled with brown and red as the opposite end of the same spectrum. The dead world has first turned brown, meaning the grayish shades continue to grow in it.

In search of the lost values of self-sacrifice, compassion, and control, Tiresias sees a vision in which they search for the holy grail. The seekers set out on a hard journey to a forlorn chapel to find the trace of Jesus Christ in the form of the drop of blood. When the society loses the classical virtues of sacrifice, the people have no solace, shelter, and shadow of protection. Tiresias directly addresses the people as 'Son of man' (20) since they are forlorn in the world. Now, the color 'red' gains momentum to refer to the trace of Christ. Eliot writes:

There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust. (25-30)

Tiresias synthesises both brown and red in the quoted lines as the 'red' implies the only way to overcome the situation of the world in which the people are living their life of misery. As David Chinitz explores, the problem of cultural dissociation surfaces repeatedly in the poem (243). On the one hand, Eliot's use of 'red' indicates the loss of Christian values that previously functioned an impetus in the Western society; on the other hand, the prominence of 'brown' as implied in various instances point out the existing situation of the society where people have lost the binding principles.

Tiresias makes use of 'purple' as the color of spiritual awakening and royalty in the text. 'Lilacs' (2) can be purple in the world of death, trying to show their presence in 'the dead land' (2). The heavy presence of death does not allow them to rise and make a meaning on their own. The spiritual significance of 'hyacinth' fails in the dead world. Tiresias sings thus:

"You gave me hyacinths first a year ago:
"They called me the hyacinth girl."
—Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead., and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light, the silence. (35-41)

The girl and the boy cannot control themselves in the garden. The decay of the society is finely portrayed through the image where the purple and blue signify neither spirituality nor the royal values. Menand Louis rightly argues: 'The images of social and cultural decadence that saturate the poetry of *The Waste Land* are often connected to images of women and of Jews...' (566). The girl loses her honor after coming from the garden as everybody begins to call her by the name of the flower: she turns into yet another form of Sybil who is neither living nor dead. She lives the life in silence.

The spiritual hollowness manifests through the use of two colors: brown and black. The spiritually bleak situation arises in the city space in Eliot's *The Waste Land*. The city is unreal 'Under the brown fog of a winter dawn' (61). The brown fog can also be interpreted as the symbol for the industrial London. Also, it refers to the spiritual dearth in Europe. As Leitch argues, 'In his poem of desolation, Eliot dramatizes experiences of spiritual darkness, confusion of soul, and separation of self from God' (43). Though Cleopatra's world is presented with a variation in the shades of gold, green, orange, and copper, this refers to the history. Tiresias weeps in the world that has lost such colors of life: 'And other withered stumps of time/Were told upon the walls; staring forms/ Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed' (105-107). The decay has occurred everywhere as the old rules of the social behavior have been supplanted with the new ones. The use of 'withered' appears more sensibly when it is read along with R. J. Owens. He writes:

'The dead' are at the same time inhabitants of the modern metropolis which for Eliot has become the epitome of the desolation of the time. The sterility in men's relations one to another is perceived not least in the life of love which is one of the dominating themes of the poem. When, in one of the central scenes, the seduction of a typist by a book-keeper is sketched, the act of love is apathetic: and we see the same type of relation in the series of feminine silhouettes which Eliot calls the daughters of Thames. (5)

The loss of control and spiritual meaning in life have caused the greatest of the trouble in the modern world. The purity in white becomes a nostalgic thing as Eliot writes, 'I remember/Those are pearls that were his eyes' (124-125). The daughters of Thames keep repeating the scenes under the brown fog and on the brown sand. The correlation further reinforces the idea of sterility in the land.

Eliot treats violet as the color of shift from one phase to the other. For instance, he directly refers to the evening by using 'violet' as he writes: 'At the violet hour, when the eyes and back/Turn upward from the desk' (215-216). The color indicates the shift from light to darkness. However, Eliot reverses the whole situation when he brings into the play the real identity of persona in the poem as he further narrates:

I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see

At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
Homeward, and brings the sailor from sea... (218-221).

Evening refers to the transition from light to darkness, while the presence of Tiresias presents the case of movement from absence of light to light: he is a blind seer who has lived both lives of man and woman. Also, as Hart argues, “In the repetition of ‘violet,’ the stooped and reified frame of the English commuter -citizen of the empire of finance capital -becomes an objective correlative for the collapse of Europe’s imperial towers: a litany that ends with London itself” (186). Like purple, Eliot treats ‘violet’ to refer to transition from ignorance to knowledge and knowledge to ignorance. Tiresias represents the journey to knowledge, while the typist and the clerk enact the machine like state of modern life in which compassion is utterly absent.

Like in the quest of Christian values or the Holy Grail, ‘red’ becomes a tool to critique the ways people treat Thames in the modern world. Eliot shows ‘red sails’ (270) in the river that runs swiftly. ‘White towers’ (290) and the ‘dusty trees’ (293) embody the ethos of the contemporary world that believes in the power of machine: the stark forces of rationalization are manifest in the modern world through towers and trams. White towers no longer symbolize purity and the dusty trees cannot represent the life that the modern world is looking for. The lynchpin of spirituality has got lost in the material quest of the world. Modern world saw the dissociation with the past in its obsession for the material transformation in quest of human happiness. Also, as Crews states, ‘Many modernist writers suggests that there has been some kind of rupture with the past and their works attempt to reestablish a link with it in the belief that this can overcome the sense of loss in contemporary society’ (18). Eliot satirically treats the emblems of civilization through the use of ‘white tower’ and then ‘dusty trees.’ If the former is the cause, the latter necessarily follows from it.

Eliot’s red refers to sacrifice, while brown symbolizes the state between life and death. The possibility of red also indicates at hope. Eliot fuses flashbacks and parallels in his poem. Harry Levin argues, ‘In that least heroic and most fragmentary of epics, he exorcized the blight of contemporaneous London by tracing through it the outline of a quest for the Holy Grail’ (624). The people searching for Christ end up in most unfavorable situation. Eliot writes:

Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit
There is not even silence in the mountains
But dry sterile thunder without rain
There is not even solitude in the mountains
But red sullen faces sneer and snarl
From doors of mudcracked houses (340-345)

The seekers assume the color of the object they are searching for right from the beginning. The tired people do not take any rest till they revive themselves in the land. Tiresias looks ‘ahead up the white road’ (363) in the ‘violet air’ (373). The transition that the poet assumes at the point signals at the transformation after the War. The road and the air gradually set the mood in the read to prepare themselves for hopeful end.

The last section depicts the victory of hope over the dark forces of the world. Very paradoxically, Eliot uses ‘black clouds’ (396) over the Himavanta in a very positive note as they regenerate ‘the limp leaves’ (395). The synthesis of brown and black helps regain purity and regeneration. The lost values of sacrifice, compassion, and control give way to reassertion of the world full of peace and order in the end. Now, Tiresias grows more confident with the bloom of purple flowers within as he says, ‘I sat upon the shore/ Fishing, with the arid plains behind me/ Shall I at least set my lands in order?’ (424-426). When Eliot wrote the poem, he was responding to the crises brought about by World War I. As Hart argues, “Eliot’s ‘once there was a culture here,’ should remind us that *The Waste Land*’s tragedy of unreconciled voices is not just a phenomenological problem: it is a metic’s political reaction to the post-1918 crisis in European national cultures, involving the sense that the home of homes is burning down the house” (184). The worries are well settled in the end as Tiresias realizes that sacrifice, compassion, and control can help attain the peace and order in the world.

Eliot’s use of colors helps understand the plight of modern world in *The Waste Land* (1922). By yoking together blindness of the persona and the world of colors, Eliot achieves the masterstroke in his poetic contemplation about the contemporary world in which white as a symbol of purity loses its value and then regains its previous meaning towards the end. Brown dangles between life and death, with loyalty towards the latter.

Red refers to sacrifice, Christ, and the Holy Grail. Purple appears to revive the spiritual ethos, fails, and then turns to violet as the shift from the 'light to darkness' as implied in 'the evening' and from the 'darkness to light' as symbolized through the perilous life of Tiresias.

Conclusion

T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* treats colors as a way of relating to both the physical and the spiritual world in the lives of the people after World War I. Eliot takes his persona through the spectrum of the colors in quest of spiritual regeneration and order after the chaotic atmosphere of World War I in Europe. The prominence of brown color reveals the fear of Sybil in a handful of dust, the daughters of Thames on the sand at the beach, and the limp leaves waiting for the rain from the black clouds in the end. The Christian values and their search are realized by the use of red. The red stains on the rock can heal problem of the waste land.

Blue, purple, and violet appear to show transition from the light to darkness and vice-versa. The world is on the path to trouble; yet, the visionary Tiresias who has travelled to light from darkness pushes the world ahead to regain order and spiritual regeneration through the thunder and showers in the Subcontinent. Most importantly, Tiresias sees that human world has come across the similar sort of problem many times in past and overcome it. From the West, he moves towards the East for the spiritual healing. The waste land witnesses purple flowers which cannot spiritually awaken the people in the beginning. The thunder gathers at the black clouds over the Himavant and repeats 'Da' thrice, meaning *Datta*, *Damatya*, and *Dayadhvam*. Tiresias gets his matra through the black cloud. The color of the cloud refers to power to give life back to its original self.

Eliot's chromatic symbolism adds an especial effect in *The Waste Land*, synthesizing the blind protagonist and the colorful world. Critically observing the contemporary reality after World War II, Eliot poetically responds to crises in European society. The use of color reveals the other side of modernist claims that present the poem as poetic reflection on the fragmentation of the world and loss of classical human values. Sacrifice, compassion, and control had functioned as the lynchpin of the society, resulting in coherence and order. The post-war Europe was a world without the binding principles.

Eliot's use of colors record the dismal picture that grows into a distressing landscape and then giving different hues of hope to restore the order lost in the beginning.

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Unheard Agonies of the Unsung Females in *The Waste Land*

Roxana Khanom

Abstract

T. S. Eliot's iconic masterpiece 'The Waste Land' has endured the test of time exploring a rich tapestry of complex issues with profound depth. Amidst its intricate narrative, numerous unsung female figures surface, injecting vital energy into the overarching story. From Madame Sosostris to the Hyacinth girl, the woman in 'The Game of Chess' to the delicate 'Lil wife,' and Cleopatra to Philomel, even a partially feminine embodiment of Tiresias—the landscape of 'The Waste Land' is marked by these diverse women, intensifying the emotional landscape of desolation, frustration, mechanical sexual life, perversion, and various other modern maladies. Amid a diseased and decaying backdrop, these women navigate their existence, adapting to the unforgiving realities of the wasteland. Strikingly, their identities have become entwined with the hyper-urbanized world as if they were common commodities.

*This paper undertakes an exploration of these intricately interwoven female characters within the thematic tapestry of *The Waste Land*. These themes not only transform notions of gender and sexuality but also delve into mythology, history, legends, religion, and the intricate human condition forged in the aftermath of World War I. The paper aims to demonstrate how these unsung females become the ultimate victims of modern malaise and strive to adapt to the corruptive influences of the modern wasteland.*

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Keywords

Agony, Unsung females, Perversion, Sexuality, Modern, History, Mythology

Objectives

The research aims to conduct a thorough analysis of the female characters in *The Waste Land*, scrutinizing their vulnerability and adaptability to contemporary social challenges. Additionally, the study seeks to delve deeply into the plight of women within the text, unraveling their navigation through a diseased modern world. Furthermore, it aims to investigate the potentiality of the unsung women, focusing on their reflection and interaction with modern afflictions. Lastly, the research provides illumination by interpreting the mythological and historical references intricately woven into the narratives.

- Conduct a comprehensive in-depth analysis of female characters in *The Waste Land*, examining their vulnerability and adaptability in facing contemporary social challenges.
- Investigate the potentiality of the female characters, emphasizing their reflection and interaction with modern afflictions.
- Examine mythological and historical references intricately woven into the narratives, providing illumination and interpretation.
- Compare the myriad female characters woven into the fabric of *The Waste Land* with the challenging women of today's modern, ailing world.
- Assist in advancing scholarly research on the female characters in *The Waste Land*.

Literature Review

T. S. Eliot's Women; The Unsung Female Voices of *The Waste Land*: In the culture page of *The Guardian*, an article has been published by Jude Rogers as an observer. This article evaluates the female characters in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* from different angles. This article opines that Eliot's personal, family, and social relationships with women greatly influenced the female characters in *The Waste Land*, but, these women were not sketched fully. This paper seeks female characters drawn from diversified sources that need much attention. Eliot portrays the female voice as the struggle against the ruined communication that characterizes the modern world.

Women Figures in *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot: Prezi.com argues that Eliot portrays women grappling with boredom, a lack of ambition, and frustration in love. This analysis underscores the notion that, according to Eliot, love—traditionally considered the wellspring of life—ultimately leads to demise in a desolate world. Eliot serves as a cautionary voice to contemporary secular individuals, urging them in the pursuit of salvation amidst the prevailing lavishness.

Historicizing the Feminine; Treatment of Women in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*: Akash Borchetia from Tezpur University, India wrote *The Waste Land* features a range of women characters—earthly and divine, ordinary and extraordinary, ancient and modern. It illustrates how women across classes, social positions, times, and abilities, have endured marginalization and subjugation within a patriarchal order since prehistoric times.

Image of Woman in Eliot's *The Waste Land*: Sahar Abdul-Ameer Al-Husseini, University of Al-Qadisiyah, January 2008 contends that Eliot employs female characters to illustrate the allure of death as a central theme. Eliot portrays women suffering from boredom, lack of ambition, and love-induced frustration. He underscores the idea that love, traditionally seen as life's holy resource, ultimately leads to death in this desolate world. He sheds light on the hollowness of contemporary love and the existential meaninglessness of life.

The Portrayal of Women in T. S. Eliot's Poems with Special Reference to the Themes of Oppression, Satire, and Myth: Dr. Rashmi Thakur and Abhyuday Singh Thakur in their research mention that these women in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* are a symbol of a paralysed society where enslaved entities are struggling to raise their voice. Eliot depicts the female voice as a tussle between the modern and mythological world.

The Unfortunate Inferiority of Women in The Work of T. S. Eliot: Prof. Kifaru gives a detailed analysis of the women characters who appear to him inferior to the male characters. He mentions Eliot's sincere yet blunt portrayal of the treatment of suffering women inspires his audience to feel not only repulsion but also shame in the civilized world.

Sexual Politics in *The Waste Land*: Eliot's Treatment of Women and Their Bodies in *A Game of Chess* and *The Fire Sermon*: Julie Elaine Goodspeed-Chadwick of Ball State University (USA) has undertaken research and asserts that T. S. Eliot perhaps had some knowledge of trauma and could realistically represent the rape of women in his work. What is more important than Eliot's traumatic experiences is an understanding of how rape, the epitome of sexual trauma, is figured in Eliot's work.

Methodology

The research methodology involves a detailed literary analysis of the primary source of *The Waste Land* focusing on verses concerning female characters. It incorporates secondary sources such as scholarly articles, books, web pages, blogs, and critical essays to provide diverse interpretations. The paper is structured after a comprehensive review of existing scholarly literature on T S Eliot's *The Waste Land* and applies feminist literary criticism to understand the representation of women. The research also draws parallels between challenges faced by women in the poem and contemporary issues emphasizing the relevance of select depraved unsung women in today's context.

Introduction

When a society is wasted out, full of rot and angry shouts, its women too lose their right way and are bound to go astray. *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot stands as one of the most enigmatic poems of the 20th century, known for its complex structure, rich symbolism, diverse disjointed persons, and profound exploration of the disillusionment and fragmentation in the aftermath of World War I. Amidst its intricate layers, one recurring subject is women of diversified nature. Eliot's depiction of these figures encapsulates the social upheaval and spiritual desolation of the era. The women's assembly as painted in *The Waste Land* is immense; each of whom is prone to modern maladies like their male partners. These women, often portrayed as damaged and disoriented, serve as poignant symbols of the broader cultural crisis. They are the adaptive representatives of the wasteland having no guilty conscience on their acts and deeds. In *The Waste Land*, we are inclusively introduced to a galaxy of female characters. Some women characters include a priestess, a princess, a fortune-teller, an upper-class lady, a lower-middle-class girl, a typist girl as well as the girls of river Thames. They too merge into the corruptive environment of *The Waste Land*. Through a close analysis of their

portrayal, Eliot's exploration of gender roles, identity, and personality crisis is focused on acute intensity.

Analysis and Interpretation

Feminists, like H  l  ne Cixous, would argue that it is not only inappropriate but also impossible for men to write about women's experiences. Woman must write herself; must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies (CIXOUS, H  l  ne: *The Laugh of the Medusa*, p. 1454.) *The Waste Land* preoccupies its attention on women, the discriminatory relationship in the middle of men. Eliot depends on two unmistakable classes of ladies to loan their voices to his *The Waste Land*. The primary category rises out of mythic starting points: the ladies in this classification incorporate characters from the established Greek and Roman myths, especially Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This gathering of Classic myths highlights the uneven relationship between the middle of men and ladies and additionally, in the middle of divine beings and mortals. The second classification of ladies in Eliot's poem is the contemporary ladies of post-World War Europe. These characters possess a space of authenticity inside the poem; their stories are everyday tales and even paltry. The representations of women inside these two separate classes share the same thought of maladies with men—frustration, alienation, perversion, desolation, and many more social issues.

The Epigraph: The Replacement of the Classical Women for the Contemporary Exhausted Women

The woman appeared first in the very beginning of the poem, in the epigraph of *The Waste Land* is Sybil. The poem is preceded by a Latin and Ancient Greek epigraph from chapter 48 of *The Satyricon of Petronius*. Petronius's *Satyricon* is a Latin work of fiction both in verse and prose. This is a tumultuous combination that symbolises, at least, those who know of the text that *The Waste Land* may also be tumultuous in style and structure. The epigraph reads:

‘Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis
vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent:

Σίβυλλα τί θέλεις; respondebat illa: ἀποθανεῖν θέλω.’ (Ovid. *Metamorphosis*. Book 14: The Sibyl of Cumae)

The Latin reads roughly translated in English

“I have seen with my own eyes, Sibyl hanging in a jar, and when the boys asked her “What do you want?”, she replied, “I want to die.” [Petronius, Gaius, *The Satyricon*. 2006]

The Cumaean Sibyl wished for eternal life and forgot to ask for eternal youth, and therefore, as time passed, she was unable to die, and simply withered away, caught in a jar, almost like a gilded bird. This incident of Sibyl condenses essentially a spiritual withering, in a metaphorical sense. Without youth and beauty, there appears no reason to live, and so she is caught in eternal suffering because of her great vanity. Vanity and the superfluous nature of beauty are themes that run throughout the poem, particularly in the first three parts of the poem. Eliot was repulsed by the obsession with beauty and vanity of women and so sought to move away from this, wherever possible. As Sibyl withered into old age, and she desires for death and expressed echoes of sadness throughout the poem.

Tiresias: The Mythological Transgender Experiencing both Male and Female Sexes

Tiresias, a mythological figure, embodies the complexities of gender fluidity and transgender experiences within the LGBTQIA++ spectrum, traversing both male and female sexes, offering a nuanced perspective on the diverse nature of human identity. Tiresias holds a pivotal role in *The Waste Land* serving as an objective observer, bridging classical and modern worlds. Eliot introduces Tiresias in the first person, highlighting his mythological transgender state that enables a unique understanding of both sexes. The throbbing humanity mentioned by Eliot symbolises Tiresias’ connection to the modern human condition, emphasising the mechanicalness of the alienated ‘human engine’ and reinventing it with a human touch. Eliot introduces Tiresias using the first person: “I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives...” (294). Just as his mythological transgender state allows him to relate to both sexes accurately, Women must write a woman. And man, man (Ibid. p. 1455). Eliot shows that he is also able to bridge both the classical and modern worlds. As Reeves notes, “The first [throbbing] stresses the mechanicalness of the alienated ‘human engine’ which exists in terms of its parts... while the second reinvents the human engine with ‘throbbing’ humanity” (69).

In this way, Tiresias is connected to the modern human condition. North agrees with this analysis writing that ‘Eliot suggests a link between the reduced conditions of the modern worker and the mythical hermaphrodite who includes all experience’ (99). The significance of this is that it brings the degradation of the worker to epic proportions; Eliot is showing that this reduction is of great importance in the poem. The transgendered role of Tiresias also serves to reinforce the theme of emasculation present throughout *The Waste Land*. Tiresias, being emasculated, symbolizes the emasculation experienced by the modern man in the poem. Eliot suggests a link between the reduced conditions of the modern worker and the mythical hermaphrodite, emphasizing the thematic thread of emasculation throughout *The Waste Land*.

Tiresias, presented as the union of the sexes, becomes the most crucial figure in the poem. Eliot condenses the plural of both men and women into a singular representation in Tiresias, making him the substance of the poem. By merging archetypal male and female attributes into the gender-neutral Tiresias, Eliot effectively addresses the complex notions of gender, sexuality, and desire present in *The Waste Land*.

In Eliot’s steps to reduce certain ideas from his poem, he ‘merged the archetypal male and female, the self-castrating Fisher King and the masturbating belladonna, in the figure of double-sexed Tiresias’ (Sicker 11). *The Waste Land* deals with the ‘notions of gender and sexuality and particularly the expression of desire’ (Zavrl 2) and the best way to solve is to have a person who is gender-neutral. Tiresias plays a critical role as the lens through which the reader perceives the myriad female characters in the extensive tapestry of *The Waste Land* including figures such as Marie, the Hyacinth Girl, Madame Sosostris, Belladonna, Typist Girl, Lil, Thames Daughters, and many more.

The initial segment, ‘The Burial of the Dead’ fictionalises the decay of modern individuals within their desolate civilization where faith in moral and spiritual values has waned. Engulfed by pursuits like sex, gambling, and violence, these activities have drained their vitality. The poem suggests that revival is only attainable through a renewed embrace of spiritual values.

Within this section, we encounter Marie, a rootless woman often speculated to be Countess Marie Larisch von Moennich, whom Eliot purportedly encountered in

America. This autobiographical snippet explores the childhood of an aristocratic woman, revealing her memories of sledding. Claiming German, not Russian, heritage, Marie, a niece and confidante of the Austrian Empress Elizabeth, reflects on her barren present existence. The narrative intertwines reflections on seasons with Marie's observations on her current state, emphasizing her rootless nature devoid of familial ties and moral consciousness, allowing her to wander without constraints. All are tired of the excessive urbanization; and feel no comfort, as goes the narrative:

A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock, (Lines 22-25)

In the next stanza, we are taken to another completely different setting, where it seems to be quite barren, dried, and deserted. There is, no water, however, the speaker adds,

Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust. (Lines 28-30)

Then, the episode of The Hyacinth Girl is introduced with intensive detail. The perspective changes once again with dialogue in which someone describes being given hyacinths

You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
They called me the hyacinth girl.
Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing, (Lines 36-40)

The encounter with the hyacinth girl unveils a man trapped in emotional paralysis. Despite harbouring romantic feelings for her, he hesitates to confess. The line 'Your arms full, and your hair wet' [Line 39] alludes to sexuality and renewal, yet the speaker appears unprepared for the responsibilities of a good husband and father. The anticipated

consummation in the Hyacinth Garden falls short revealing the male's impotence and leading to a crisis and subversion of desire.

Gabrielle McIntire, a critic, notes that desire acknowledges its own failure even in the moment of its expression; the moment of desire becomes strange and estranged from the subject. The lover's response turns inward, away from the 'hyacinth girl,' towards desolation reminiscent of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*. This episode paints a picture of love in decline intensified by the reference to Wagner's opera, a tale of unattainable love. Tristan waits by the desolate sea for Isolde's healing in the episode of *Tristan and Isolde*. Arriving too late, he succumbs to desperation, highlighting the message: the wasteland thrives only when the sexes are in harmony. Unity is crucial for ensuring the health and fertility of both men and women. The fertility of the wasteland is attainable only through the harmonious collaboration of the sexes.

Another significant woman roaming around the diverse tapestry of 'The Burial of the Dead' in *The Waste Land* is Madame Sosostris, a famous clairvoyant. According to North (2001), Eliot's Madam Sosostris is named after a character from Aldous Huxley's novel *Crome Yellow*. Madame Sosostris's figure is a reference to Miss Jessie Weston's book. A Tarot deck of cards has four suits; cup, lance, sword, and dish – the life symbol found in the Holy Grail story. The Tarot cards were originally used to determine the events of the highest importance to a person.

The clairvoyant, as portrayed by T. S. Eliot is considered 'the wisest woman in Europe' because the world is a tattered wasteland where everyone is in search of answers—a fortuneteller provides false security with her seemingly absolute understanding of destiny, and everyone is desperate enough to believe her. She actually doesn't know much about fortune telling even though she is reading the fortune of the protagonist. She doesn't know the protagonist's real fortune. She finds that his card is the Phoenician Sailor, and she warns him against death by water, not realizing that the other inhabitants of the modern wasteland is that the way into life may be by death itself. The drowned Phoenician sailor is a type of fertility god whose image was thrown into the sea annually as a symbol of the death of summer.

We get the reference of another character, Belladonna who too got astray in the corrupting influence of the wasteland.

Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,
The lady of situations. (Lines: 49-50)

Belladonna, translating to ‘beautiful lady’ in Italian, is a reference to the Virgin Mary in this context. Interestingly, one of the tarot cards features ‘Belladonna’ (line 49), a term carrying contradictory meanings as beauty and virginity, and cosmetics and poison. Taking a closer look at the figure of Belladonna, readers can recognize her as another example of Eliot’s portrayal of beautiful yet dangerous women—simultaneously victims and victimizers, both the abused and abusers, susceptible to seduction and the source of it. There are more characters like her in the narrative. It’s important to note that Belladonna is also an ancient poisonous plant, fitting seamlessly into the thematic landscape.

In simpler terms, Eliot connects the image of a beautiful woman with the spiritual beauty of Christ’s Mother. This isn’t a fleeting beauty but one with a celebrated history, as Eliot indicates by referencing Leonardo da Vinci’s painting, *The Madonna of the Rocks*. Consistent with his style, Eliot in this early portrayal establishes a direct link between the Virgin Mary’s classical beauty and her moral beauty.

The Women in Part Two; *The Game of Chess*: Lady of Situations, Lil Wife, The Lady of the Rocks, and Other Barmaids

Lady of Situations, Upper-class Fashionable Lady: *A Game of Chess* opens with a detailed depiction of a lavishly adorned room where a woman is seated on a ‘Chair’ resembling a throne. The initial line of *A Game of Chess* alludes to a line from Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*: ‘The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne ...’ (Lines 77–78)

The first scene unfolds in the drawing room of a fashionable lady known as the Lady of Situations, an expert in sexual intrigues. Her drawing room is opulent and exudes an air of sensuality. The artworks including paintings recount tales of ancient love and rape. The narrative of Philomel, the violated girl transformed into a nightingale, serves as a symbol of purification through suffering. However, in contemporary times, love has

devolved into lust leaving little room for hope of regeneration.

“The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice
And still she cried, and still the world pursues,
‘Jug Jug’ to dirty ears.” (Lines 98-102)

Yet, this woman is desperately waiting for somebody, most probably a man whose ‘footsteps shuffled on the stairs’ (107). The Lady of Situation is waiting for her lover who arrives after some time. She complains of headaches which is representative of the nervous breakdown of a modern woman. After some petty conversation, the lady wishes to run out into the streets. Her empty, aimless routine represents the barren life of a modern woman. She has to follow the dull routine, a hot water bath in the morning, a game of chess in the club in the afternoon, and then rest. One is reminded of the aimless running of rats among the dead bones. Yet, her loneliness is a reference to modern isolation and disillusionment, and her following the dull routine repeatedly refers to the robotic life of modern women. The lady of the situation is interpreted in a different light. ‘That such masculine identification with women, such imaginary femininity in the male writer, is itself historically determined is clear enough.’ (Huysen 45)

The Low Living of Lil Wife: The second scene shifts to a tavern where two ladies talk about sex matters. In the second setting of the poem, we see at least two people conversing and we know for sure that one of them is a woman. It is a sexist approach that the poetic persona is a female because they are gossiping about another woman. Lil’s husband, Albert has come back from the army after four years. He wants an active sex life. *The Lady of the Rocks* advises Lil to look young and pretty to retain the love of her husband, otherwise, there are many other girls who will give company to her husband. She is so traditional and so irrational that she asks Lil ‘What you get married for if you don’t want children?’ (164). She is such a shallow character. She matches all the gender roles imposed on women and expects everyone else to accept them as she does. She thinks that even if Albert cheated on his wife, he has a right to do it. She puts all the blame on Lil even for her abortion which was about to result in Lil’s death. Most probably those women in the bar are the working women who have had the chance of

working because all able men are in the army during the First World War. This situation suggests the suppression of women in men's presence.

The relationship between Lil and her husband is characterized by sexuality without fertility—a relationship that 'has been bankrupted by the demands placed upon the wife to serve as décor, as procreation machine, and as domestic servant' (Gunnink 3). In this subjugated position, Lil loses the freedom to govern the sexual use of her body and becomes a vivid embodiment of the results of male oppression in the modern world.

Women in *The Fire sermon*: The Typist Girl, Thames Daughter

The Typist girl and her routine robotic sex: In the poem, *The Fire Sermon*, there is another couple who has a sexual encounter but has no communication with each other. Both are described by their occupations and not their names. The young man carbuncular is 'a small agent's clerk' who can be argued as ironic because of the way he is dedicated to his job but seems to only live at the typist's house on certain occasions. In the evening, when the typist girl comes home from the office, she waits for her lover. He comes after dinner and enjoys with the girl. The girl is indifferent but feels relieved after the sex act. It is the kind of animal-like sex that modern young men and women have. The typist's fornication of a young man as carbuncular is nothing but 'a series of mechanical gestures and dull responses; she does not even appear to possess a real sexual appetite' (Sicker 10). The mechanical sex behavior between both sexes typifies a loveless world.

Sex on River, a Fusion of the Past and Present: Along with oil and tar there is sex on river Thames. In earlier days, Elizabeth and her lover had pleasure excursions on the river. Now the daughters of Thames give stories of their seduction. The three girls, the first from Richmond, the second from Moorgate, and the third from Margate Sands tell their stories of rape. Such people have nothing to complain as this is a common occurrence on the river and its banks. The girls who live on the banks of River Thames relate their sex experiences. The first daughter of the river Thames was born at Highbury which is full of trams and dusty trees. She visited Richmond and Kent which are picnic spots on the bank of the river. At Richmond, she was criminally assaulted by a man while she was lying on her back on the floor of a small boat. The second daughter of the

Thames was ravished at Moor-gate. After the act, the man felt repentant and wept. He promised to reform himself. The girl has no regrets. This is a part of her life. The third daughter of the Thames was ravished on the Margate sands. She does not remember anything. She compares herself to the broken fingernails of the dirty hands which are useless. Her parents are poor and expect nothing. A tune from Wagner's Opera can be heard on the riverbank.

Female Portrayals in *The Waste Land*: A Contemporary Reflection

The depiction of women in *The Waste Land* serves as a reflective surface capturing the challenges, complexities, discrimination, and societal expectations faced by women during Eliot's era. Upon entering the 21st century, a striking continuity emerges in the portrayal of women, echoing Eliot's observations. A meticulous examination of these representations offers a lens through which the enduring status and roles of women are vividly reflected.

The relevance of the female characters in *The Waste Land* is still evident in every moment and every places. Whether it's the haunting presence of Marie, the enigma of the Hyacinth Girl, the pulsating typist, the disheartening Lil, the corruptive Thames daughter, or the Lady of Situations, these figures find commonality in contemporary society. Eliot skillfully crafts a tapestry of female experiences marked by disillusionment, unmet desires, and a pervasive sense of desolation that still echoes in the voices of women in our postmodern wasteland.

The reverberations of Eliot's female characters persist in our present-day situations. They provide an avenue to delve deep into problems and seek solutions for gender identity concerns. A postmodern contemplation of these depictions of women encourages us to assess the attitude and progress made for them. Despite many advancements in women's rights and evolving gender norms in the 21st century, enduring challenges persist for women. A hundred years may have elapsed, but the oppression of women and the stifling of their voices continue to persist in a male-dominated world. Reflecting on and exploring the female portrayals in *The Waste Land*, enables a meaningful discourse on gender, and social expectations to form a new mindset needed for reconstructing gender roles in the ongoing quest for equality.

Conclusion

The Waste Land prominently features women, both contemporary and mythical, who typify the torturous state, the unheard agony of the diseased world. Against the backdrop of *The Waste Land*, a fractured social world unfolds, populated by subjugated women yearning to make their voices heard. T. S. Eliot skillfully captures the stifled echoes of these female voices, portraying them as a battleground against the breakdown of communication in the modern era. These unsung women contribute to the varied themes in the poem, enriching the tapestry of gender roles, sexuality, mythology, history, and the human condition of post-World War I. Through their stories, Eliot delves into the multifaceted challenges faced by women in a post-war society creating a vivid portrayal of their resilience shaping their existence within the desolate landscape of *The Waste Land*.

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Anticipation in Disillusionment and Despair Reading Eliot's *The Waste Land*

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Abstract

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This study analyses Eliot's The Waste Land from a humanistic perspective and after all search for the causes and consequences of despair, disillusionment, and frustration the study claims that the pessimistic flashbacks of the past and negative looks for the days to come are human enemies. Moral and ethical guidance are suggested to live peacefully in poetic anticipation. The Journey through The Waste Land Eliot in his poem seeks multiple ways of living and finally, it is nothing more than the poetic imagination and metaphor to escape from an alienated path. Eliot exposes the social disharmony through the chaos of dislocation, depression, and death of the Londoners and he paves the way for alternative methods to get alive with hope. The study is made on social and socio-cultural investigative methods to find out the social wrongs to which Richard Aldington, Wesley Brown, Nevill Coghill, and Francis Turner Palgrave's critiques are applied.

Keywords

Anticipation, Disillusionment, Investigation, Alienation

Introduction

Thomas Stearns Eliot, an eminent writer, poet, dramatist, and critic of the 20th century, writes about poverty, hunger, disillusionment, and despair. He raises the issues of social disharmony from which people turn to depression, yet he is optimistic as he believes in

myth and mystery. *The Waste Land* begins with human cruelties that Eliot observed in April and develops the poetic demarcation of whether happiness is a capsule for living or a superficial emotional detail to be found in possessions. *The Waste Land* questions empty sexual encounters of an alcoholic stupor but the speaker suggests that no matter what one's history may be, there is no getting away from boredom in any part of the life. Poetic mythic and Eliot's characters all cry against the cruelties and carry an impressive remark to hate the social wrongs and deal positively with them to end the viruses that they inflict on the systematic ways of living.

In both the sections of the poem 'The Burial of the Dead' and 'A Game of Chess', Eliot narrates the events of human disillusionment and the rough games played among the communities' people. Eliot also brings references from mythic characters and middle-class couples who seem to be able to succeed at doing nothing better than getting on each other's nerves. Eliot suggests to all to live with hope. He trusts in birth even after death and his philosophy is that we can find everything in patience he starts his poem *The Waste Land* critiquing dishonesty, cruelty, and spiritual dryness whereas he concludes the poem with an appeal to keep silent. Eliot remembers the past, thinks about the future, and is hopeful of situational changes as he writes:

April is the cruelest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.
Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee
With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,
And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
... Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

Shantih shantih shantih. (lines 1-11, 433-34)

The first part of *The Waste Land* is dedicated to Ezra Pound where Eliot memorises the cruelest event of April that is still reflective of the cruelty when Eliot lost his sources of

inspiration in the difficult historical periods like First World War time.

‘The Burial of the Dead’ exposes the individual but selfish interests of the people, their purposes, and interlinks to history that is with many powerful references and beautiful language, not to mention powerful and moving sentiments and raises issues of his ancestors’ Unitarian traditions with famous clairvoyants’ views. Eliot discusses the differences between hangman and death by water. He makes his readers confused with the images of the unreal city and the activities that modern men do there in the 1920s.

‘The Burial of the Dead,’ particularly in terms of the tone and the mood sets questioning *The Waste Land*. The reader comes to feel that it is one because there has been no life-giving rain; there is no water in it; nothing of that sweet liquid that can that restore the dead land. The water is the source for life-giving and the water-based section celebrates countless myths from countless human cultures over countless ages, every one of which associates life with the supple and the quickened, and death with the dried out or desiccated and the dulled, the numbed.

April is indeed the cruelest month, then, not because the ghost of Chaucer or his particular sentiments on the same ageless topic haunt those opening lines of Eliot’s, but because it is that month in which the struggle between the forces of death and the forces of life are there for all to see as most obviously in conflict. Reference to the Starnbergersee is particularly appropriate at this juncture. It is at that lake that the so-called crazy King Ludwig of Bavaria, the royal patron who underwrote much of Richard Wagner’s operatic efforts, including his Parsifal, which recounted the Grail legend for 19th-century Germans, not only built his renowned storybook castle that imitates the Grail castle but subsequently drowned himself, a suicide.

Another section of the poem ‘A Game of Chess,’ is the game of intellectuality but it turns here to be a meaningless match based on the myth-making of two frustrated couples encountering confused connubial love and sexual coupling. Eliot writes:

Above the antique mantel was displayed
As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene
The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice

And still she cried, and still the world pursues,
Jug, Jug to dirty eyes. (Lines 97-103)

These lines refer to the myth-making of Eden's glance at Satan and Philomel's change to a bird. People cross the alley where they can see the bones of dead people.

'The Fire Sermon,' begins with an allusion and Tiresias myth making. The speaker confesses as the river Thames' speed is broken down; it decreases Ganga's speed which symbolises the broken love with being confused 'in love' role. As Eliot writes, 'The nymphs are departed/ the sweet Thames run softly till I end my song' (lines 175-76). Without a doubt, this theme of love's betrayal, like the spring's arrival permeates the entire Eliot's poem, and the speaker and reader come to learn about a betrayal that is fomented by unreasonable expectations and desires as well as by self-deceptions and self-serving machinations. The unwillingness of the poetic persona unravels the material universe to set its clocks by an individual needs. In the same way, love is all too often the name given to the irresistible desire to scratch a bodily itch by abusing an individual's trust and confidence.

'Death by Water' references to a sailor's death. Phlebas the Phoenician sailor was found dead in a deep sea and whose images of handsomeness are now turned to the bones. Here the speaker tries to anticipate the human processes. Furthermore, Madame Sosostri reads the Tarot, the earliest form of the modern deck of playing cards, whose suits—the cup, the lance, the sword, and the dish—are derived from the Grail legend as well, according to Weston. As comical as the madame's turn is, then, it ties together two of the major dynamics of the poem: The individual's desire to seek the fulfillment that the future represents (that is, the quest) is matched only by his or her fear to know what that future may be. This attraction-repulsion relationship with the future, embodied in the alternating promise and nagging insistence of spring, will shortly be embodied in the fear of the resurrection of the wrong dead, that is, the infamous 'sprouting' of the corpse that Stetson 'planted last year in [his] garden.' But, like the future, that moment in *The Waste Land* is yet to come. For now, and for the speaker, there is the 'future' that Madame Sosostri, reading the cards, has to tell him. That it is nonsense is made clear by the fact that she tells the speaker, who is lost in a wasteland where there is not even the sound of water, to fear death by drowning. Inadvertently on Madame Sosostri's part, here again, nevertheless, is another foreshadowing, in this case of Phlebas, the

drowned Phoenician sailor of the fourth part of *The Waste Land*, 'Death by Water.'

The last part of the poem 'What the Thunder Said' anticipates human disillusionment and despair with the Godly saying to keep silent. As Eliot writes:

After the torchlight red on sweaty faces
After the frosty silence in the gardens
After the agony in stony places
The shouting and the crying
Prison and places and reverberation
Of thunder of spring over distant mountains
He who was living is now dead
We who were living are now dying
With a little patience. (Lines 322-330)

The thunder has a special hope for life and the living expectation as the earth is round and everything goes on rotation. What we expect and observe in this world are all elusive and reality might be disclosed in waiting. *The Waste Land* is that same mysterious figure, 'the third who walks always beside you'—the presence that is both unreal and real, threatening and familiar, companionable and distant. Eliot seems to be implying that every human story is a remarkable story of survival in the face of incredible odds, as Christ's Resurrection is meant to attest.

Eliot's Journey on *The Waste Land*

Eliot and his first wife, Vivienne Haigh-Wood Eliot travelled to the coastal resort of Margate Kent for a period of convalescence. While travelling there, Eliot worked on the poem *The Waste Land* and possibly showed an early version to his close friend Ezra Pound travelling to Paris in November 1921. He returned from Lausanne in early January 1922 and Pound gave him editorial comments and significant cuts to the manuscript to which Eliot later dedicated the poem to Pound. Letters written by both Vivienne and Eliot give some insight into the creation and completion of the poem *The Waste Land*.

The Waste Land is an argumentative poem based on the philosophy of myth and mystery narratologies that seeks possibility within impossibility and the last straw what Eliot's insights is patience. Eliot's philosophy is guided by the modernist movement,

argumentative narratives, and serious literature, and his poetry in particular points out the social and socio-cultural representations. *The Waste Land* opens the eyes against the cruelties and concludes with messages for wait and see. Eliot mixes the best and worst of the past and present European culture, literature, and tradition in particular human imagination and its capacity to make order out of chaos and randomness. *The Waste Land* inwards a shining example of blending into the periphery of World War I with a reflection of the European dominance that created horror, terror, and suffering for the people. The war caused a terrific situation that imposed negative effects painting dreadful pictures of the withering of humanity.

European notion of war had indeed produced a question on their civilization as they murdered innocent people exposing their cruelty with ferocity on humanity in the first place. Their destructiveness and futility of the war inevitably give rise to the disillusionment that the catastrophe of the war ultimately endangers the women, children, and senior citizens. Disillusionment that the literature of the 1920s, *The Waste Land* a notable example in this regard, would reflect. The title suggests dread, despair, and complexities of the life that people face mirror the social realities and portray our emptiness. Bitter irony implied in the text is a bloodbath achieved by demolishing the myth of European greatness. 'The Burial of the Dead' sections of the poem show missing opportunities, hopelessness, emptiness, and despair in the place of that previous self-confident arrogance. As much as an irony that not even art could successfully engage without seeming to distort itself as well.

Eliot's Literary Career and Critique on *The Waste Land*

Eliot's struggle in life, literary status, and overall progress concerns his relationship with Ezra Pound. About Eliot and Pound's relationship, A.K. Sinha writes, 'In 1922, appeared his poem *The Waste Land*, dedicated to Ezra Pound, and published in volume from next year' (*English Poetry* 109). Eliot is not only the friend of Pound but they take each other as mentors and Eliot shares everything with Pound in every moment whereas Pound inspires and encourages Eliot to write poems. Dr. Radhey L. Varshney's observation in regards to Eliot and Pound's relationship and about the poem *The Waste Land* is:

The Waste Land owes its present form to the severe editing by Pound. The spectacle of Europe committing suicide was made clearer to Eliot by his association with Pound.

Even though it would be exaggerated to say that Ezra Pound was responsible for the making of Eliot the poet, certainly he caused a variety of transformations, technical and otherwise. By the thirties; however, Eliot and others with their more humane works swung away from Pound who was left to follow his political and poetical blind alley to the bitter end. (*Cocktail Party* 6)

Varshney critiques not only Eliot's poem but observes also the political suicidal games and rescues the European community and their transformation practices.

Eliot tells about the myth and mystery of the Fisher King's death after he was wounded in the sexual organ. He writes about the legendary myth of the Holy Grail and the philosophy of Christianity as writes Francis Turner Palgrave, '...unattainable even by predecessors of not inferior individual genius' (*The Golden Treasury* 450). Eliot gives priority to an individual genius in his essay, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' and writes, 'awareness and affirmation of his literary and cultural heritage is one of the most prominent features' (*British And American Poetry* 622). He brings the historical references from Sybil's responses in Chaucer's Prologue as mentioned in *The Canterbury Tales* and a myth-making of Madam Sosostriis, a pseudo-Egyptian name assumed by a fortune teller in Aldous Huxley's novel *Chrome Yellow* 1921 concerned with psychological disorder and cultural phenomena. His imagination of the past makes him remember to assassination of Archduke Franz-Ferdinand in 1914 by Serbian nationalists. The assassination of the heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and his wife Sophia in Sarajevo, the capital of Serbia is a painful memory to Eliot who connects history with mythmaking. The event brings doomed barrenness in *The Waste Land* territory.

Eliot is worried also about the death of Phlebas, the drowned Phoenician sailor that he connects in his philosophical writings, especially in the poems and drama. Eliot tries to create hope even in a hopeless situation. In this regard, Nevill Coghill writes, '...begins in a sad, liberal agnosticism and steadily strengthens into the positive grief-in joy and joy-in grief of Christianity' (*Murder in the Cathedral* 10). Worrying about several painful events that he studied and observed in in-between 1914 and 1921 are the sources of his philosophical writings. Eliot's literary developments and philosophical genuineness mismatch his hope with dreams, desires, and despair turning to a mental disorder and loss of literary confidence. Eliot laments in loss of those great literary

figures in the war and the turnover of other historical periods.

Painful experiences of the First World War in the demise of literary figures brought a mental disbalance in the experimental and innovative activities of Eliot. His philosophical views on *The Waste Land* are impressive and he appeals to save humanity fresh as he claims, 'dead tree gives no shelter' (The Burial of the Dead 23). *The Waste Land* typifies dismantled parts of the modernism in English language and literature as Coghill writes:

In *The Waste Land*, the poet's desolation is not caused by a sense of fog-bound intellectualist voices in which he feels himself drowning, but by the deeper desolation of a world declining into materialism. His great question is harder than before to ask: yet a kind of answer from some further region is faintly hinted... explores trudging through a dangerous waste of snow. (*Murder in the Cathedral* 12).

Eliot's lines intend to recall Christ's walking unrecognized ejecting the despair and darkness of this world. His involvement in many of those modern activities, particularly among the young, to these very real shifts are quite against cataclysmic events.

He writes about the dismantled human condition and their paradoxical situation who suffer from anarchy and chaos-nihilism. Richard Aldington in his poems analyses this world and writes, 'World is filled with cruelty' (*The Complete Poems of Richard Aldington* 57). According to Wesley, Aldington honors Eliot, exposes his relationships with Pound, and writes, 'a year or so before Eliot read him the manuscript draft of *The Waste Land* in London' (*Darkness Strutters* 75). Eliot visited Aldington in the country and they developed their friendship about which Aldington quotes Wesley, 'I was surprised to find that Eliot admired something so popular, and then went on to say that if a contemporary poet, conscious of his limitations as Gray was, would concentrate all his gifts on one such poem he might achieve a similar success' (*Tragic Magic* 77). After having a mental diagnosis of Eliot's health problem, the psychiatrist Doctor Roger Vittoz recommended him rest for the time being. He applied for three months' leave from the bank where he was employed causing for nervous breakdown.

Withering humanity's perspective and purpose is endangered in those who survived it, particularly those of a more creative genius like Eliot's philosophy. Eliot's *The Waste Land* sounds like Paul Fussell's 'The Great War and Modern Memory'. Both of

them make extremely convincing cases of cultural catastrophe that invites war which John Osborne says, is ‘sensational events’ (*Look Back in Anger* 10). Eliot ironizes the European wars and in which the public perceived its purpose and results. Eliot’s mental and emotional condition at the time of *The Waste Land*’s composition denies the horrors and fears generated by four years of unceasing warfare found in the texture of the poetry of *The Waste Land*’s effects. The poem creates confusion on Eliot’s life condition, health issues, and works that were either undergoing treatment for or having a mental breakdown at a psychiatric clinic in Lausanne, Switzerland, in the fall of 1921, during the period that he was writing *The Waste Land*. The fact about his literary genius is that the poem was hardly composed in one sitting or even several times though he was suffering from ill health. It combines as many if not more bits and pieces from earlier, often discarded poetic treatments by Eliot himself, written at scattered times in his life.

The Waste Land opens with people visiting one of those European health resorts or spas frequented by members of the leisure class further underscoring what his time in Lausanne must have seemed like for him. In resorting in this way to biographical information to clarify poetic detail, it is important to remember that the issue is not whether biography and current events can shape poetic output but whether they do anything more than that, thereby giving the poetry all its purpose and meaning. It questions where life and its attendant experiences leave off and the poetry, which is what must matter, begins. Eliot seems aware of this conundrum just about the same time that the aftermath of the war was sinking in on both public life and private mentalities that we can read in his essay ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent,’ in which he argues forcefully for the necessary separation between an individual and the society. Indeed, *The Waste Land* is a complex text written in irregular stanza patterns and line lengths.

Eliot uses different languages like German, French, and Spanish, too in addition to English. Anyone who follows Eliot’s poetry would have been particularly struck by his methodology. Eliot follows Virgil’s great epic the *Aeneid* and Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* with complicated surface details. Eliot’s trick is that he lets his readers know that he is doing this so that along with him, or at least along with the poem’s unnamed and unintroduced protagonist; Eliot’s readers share the quest that portrays and embodies appropriately enough for meaning-making on a stormy sea of signifiers. Eliot’s intellectual philosophy is applied in *The Waste Land* and the imagination

of the readers to make it connected to a society that cannot otherwise be easily destitute. Eliot's weapon used to represent the society is consistent use of allusions. Throughout his critical career, Eliot maintained that nothing should be regarded as a substitute for engaging the poem, as poetry, in its terms.

The commentators and readers of poetry in general and of Eliot's poetry, in particular, seem adamant in insisting that his poetry is little more than valued autobiographer who may not be missing the critical point. The dangerous power that Eliot applied is in imagining the society and identifying a source in *The Waste Land*. A better understanding of society and social representation is an understanding of the verse/verses or the philosophical poems like *The Waste Land* as they appear in the contents and reflect in the form. It would be wise to recall Eliot's justification, from his essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent,' for having an awareness of voices of the past. It is in the voices of the present that the past speaks most clearly and that to the only audience that ever can matter the living. Anything more is guesswork and anything less is severely restricted by the endless possibilities for other interpretations that offer themselves even as one meaning or interpretation is emerging.

The Waste Land ends with symbolic markers of forward progress with allusions to Dante. Rain-bringing thunder has no further vacillation and he is free to make his way past the modern hell in which the poetry of *The Waste Land* has embroiled till now. Eliot uses allusions not to show off his learning but to underscore his poem's meaning, such as it is, it should mainly serve as a demonstration of the delightfully rewarding complexities of structure and insinuation of those same allusions. The final allusion to Dante is spoken regarding Arnaut Daniel, who has just greeted Dante after Guido Guinizzelli had called Daniel to Dante's attention as the 'miglior fabbro'—the better maker or craftsperson. The separation between the poet and the identity of the speaker in *The Waste Land* is paradoxical. Indeed, some will argue that *The Waste Land* has no speaker or at least one who is consistent from part to part, stanza to stanza. Unlike Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,' where the speaker is easily identified as Prufrock, or, for the sake of contrast, 'Whispers of Immortality,' where the speaker is the poet, *The Waste Land* is poetry more in keeping with 'Portrait of a Lady' or 'La Figlia che Piange,' in which it is difficult to discern if the 'I' is the poet or a fictive projection that he simply has not taken the trouble to introduce and identify by name and function.

The Waste Land depicts excruciatingly nightmarish detail and guides for seeking for better part of the human identification in his opening dedication, that is Eliot's way of confirming for his readers that they, too, have now successfully made their way out of the hellishness that *The Waste Land* is intended to portray and, like him and his speaker, stand near the peak of Dante's purgatorial mountain. *The Waste Land* takes its readers on a hellish journey for the sake of bringing them, like Dante, to some point of positive recognition that the hell of self can be mastered and left behind. With the achievement of that aim in mind, such a reader will find useful the following characterization of the approach to the text of *The Waste Land* that is about to ensue. New methods and philosophical approaches applied in the poem expose a wilderness of words and word images, allusions, and literary excavations that question nonsense speaking of the then-London society.

The great cities of Western history—Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria, Vienna, London—are named in quick succession, reminding the reader of all the doomed souls already encountered among them. *The Waste Land* messages to create hope removing social commentary of absolute despair. The Buddha or Augustine, Tiresias or Lil, even Jesus Christ, and certainly Phlebas the Phoenician. And yet our hero, perhaps unlike anyone who has ever lived before, has been brought up to believe that he and his age are anything but typical, and are the inheritors of the ages, the modern world fulfilled at last in the system, thought, and institution, gramophone and taxi cab. Liberating disillusionment is his solution now to learn how to be human, not smug and European and upper middle class, but holistically human. Then, through sympathy self-discipline, and service, he finds the beginning of the springs of an inner peace that will culminate in a genuine self-acceptance, a story, at least Sophocles' Tiresias would agree, as old as Oedipus of Thebes.

The Waste Land is a critique of neither the myth nor the urban apocalypse but it is the first work of Western secular literature to recognize and, more importantly, to illustrate, that no human value system is central to the needs of the entire human race, and yet 'regarded as an experience which appears in a soul, the whole world for each is peculiar and private to that soul.' That is Eliot's citation from F. H. Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*, which the poet of *The Waste Land* quotes in his note to line 412. As much as it is also an expression of the theme of the poem, the myopia of the poem's contemporary

responses confirms that theme's validity.

The Waste Land may be meaningful only as a commentary on the severe limitations on our ability to arrive at universally acceptable meanings, and it achieves that 'meaning' of its own by disassociating itself from the techniques of meaningful literature, a goal it further achieves by bringing to bear, for examination and consideration, fragments of that very kind of literature as it has developed, in the West, through several millennia. It is not, however, the thematic substance of the poetry's literary fragments, or their sources, for that matter, that constitute the poem's meaning, which is instead arrived at as its readers undergo the same processes of self-discovery as the speaker undergoes. We are the product of this wasteland while the land lasts, and then it is gone. Eliot continually confirms meaning by continually denying its possibility by just as constantly echoing its myriad formulations in the past. The reader who studies each particular fragment fails to realize that it is a whole, not a partial vision, that matters. Thus this 'theme' of *The Waste Land*, though it is assuredly the heart of the poem's poetic experience, is developed by example, never stated, for the simple reason that to even hint at it as a theme would be to undermine its validity.

The Holy Grail with the mechanical lovemaking of the typist, the clerk, and Tiresias languages pointing toward the ineffable; *Shantih shantih shantih*. If the Sanskrit word is generally translated to mean the peace that surpasses understanding, then that is another way of identifying that point at which words fail but life goes, happily, on. Such an ending to such a word-intensive poem is a self-evident mockery of the efficacy of words to do anything more than confuse readers out of the very peace they seek to find through and in them. That is one reason that it is fair to see *The Waste Land*, for all its bookish erudition, as a cautionary against trusting anything too much, particularly literature. If the poem can be summed up in the words, 'Physician, heal thyself,' then the poem would be giving itself the lie to end by implying that it is the answer. It presents itself only as a way to find an answer.

Conclusion

The Waste Land after all search for the causes and consequences of despair, disillusionment, and frustration is the hope that enables us to become optimistic. Among the five different sections of the poem, the opening parts of the poem deal with the fight, wars, and cruelties in different kinds of games that Londoners experienced and the last

part suggests to be silent with the words of thunder's sayings. Waste dreams and desires are particularly symbolized in *The Waste Land* when that experience does not offer a way far safer, specific, and objective. Moral and ethical guidance to live peacefully is poetic anticipation. The journey through the wasteland that Eliot depicts in his poem seeks multiple ways of living and finally, it is nothing more than the poetic imagination and metaphor, perhaps among the various practices devised, of each individual's journey through the confusing notion of life itself. Eliot exposes the social disharmony through the chaos of disharmony, depression, and death of the Londoners as data shows.

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A Flight from Personal to Universal T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*

Dr. Neelam Rani

Abstract

T. S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land', a multifaceted piece of art has five parts comprising 433 lines which not only throws light on the mechanical, immoral, and untraditional life of the wastelanders but also suggests the way to salvation. Eliot started spewing quotes like a mentally disturbed person and created a very lengthy work. This original draft was edited by Ezra Pound who has cut almost half the portion of this social document. It is worthwhile to search how Eliot presents the real picture of modern society through these personal sufferings. Interestingly, Eliot with the help of Ezra Pound universalizes his pains and agonies through references, allusions, and quotes from the past. In reality, the first three sections of this long poem spotlight human miseries due to a lack of moral and spiritual values. Surprisingly, these tribulations are still prevalent in society even after 100 years of the publication of this masterpiece of Eliot. At the same time, the valuable suggestions from the last two parts especially the last are relevant in the present scenario also. It is worth mentioning that even today after a century, Eliot's views of self-purification and self-discipline are noticeable as they can lead to a good moral society if each individual purifies and disciplines himself. In other words, the present paper is an attempt to draw that the study of the past can derive a solution for a better future for the whole world including every individual.

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Keywords

Spewing, Agonies, Universalization, Self-purification, Self-discipline

Introduction

T. S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* mentions four world-famous wastelands. Amongst these wastelands, Eliot's wasteland is new, known as the modern wasteland while the other three wastelands are old. Eliot refers to all three wastelands— two mythical wastelands and one Biblical wasteland. The Biblical wasteland as mentioned in the Old Testament warns the people against idolatry worshipping. The lands of King Oedipus and King Fisher have to endure pain and suffering due to the sins of their respective rulers. King Oedipus's country suffered as the king had sex with his mother. Likewise, the people of King Fisher's country had to face famine as the soldiers of King Fisher ravished the nuns of the Chapel Perilous which contained the Holy Grail. As a result, the king became impotent and the people suffered from extreme hunger.

Eliot was well acquainted with these wastelands as he had been a keen reader since his childhood. According to Wikipedia sources, he suffered from a 'congenital double inguinal hernia' during his childhood. That is why he could neither 'participate in many physical activities' nor 'socialize with his peers'. In his isolation and loneliness, his infatuation with language and literature was developed. He studied different languages, Latin, German, French, ancient Greek, and Sanskrit. It developed his taste for comparative literature. He even spent time reading about Indian philosophy, Buddhism, Hinduism etc.

Famous philosopher Bertrand Russell was greatly impressed with Eliot's outstanding knowledge of literature, language, and philosophy. In this regard, Garrick Davis quotes the following excerpt from one of Russell's letters in his article 'What to Make of T. S. Eliot?'

'My pupil Eliot was there- the only one who is civilized, and he is ultra civilized knows his classics very well, is familiar with all French literature from Villon to Vildrach, and is all altogether impeccable in his taste but has no vigour or life- or enthusiasm...'
(Davis Garsick Vol-37)

Therefore, some scholars have opined that Russell had an affair with Eliot's wife Vivienne. Undoubtedly, the married life of Eliot was not good. His wife was a clinical patient suffering from insomnia and anxiety. In reality, both Eliots often complained

about their physical and mental health. They could not get rid of it despite their efforts as Eliot used to drink a lot and his wife was a drug addict.

In a personal letter, Eliot confesses: ‘To her, the marriage brought no happiness. To me, it brought the state of mind out of which came *The Waste Land*.’

Truly, as Eliot was unhealthy mentally, he started spewing quotes. According to ts.com, Eliot started ‘amassing a ragbag of fragments’ as since 1914 he has been planning to communicate his personal experiences and emotions along with the global distress. Finally, he finished his writing in a sanatorium in Switzerland. On this account, Jed Esty, Vartan Gregorian Professor of English, calls this poem a ‘PTSD poem’ which means post-traumatic stress disorder poem. Later on, Eliot comments while speaking of *The Waste Land* as recorded in Dolly Delightly’s book blog:

To me it was only a relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life; it is just a piece of rhythmical grumbling.

However, the poem was published after much revision and re-revision by Eliot as suggested by his wife and famous literary figure Ezra Pound. Interestingly, he deleted some parts of the original draft acting upon the advice of his first wife. Such as the following excerpt from one of his letters reveals what is maintained by Mark Ford in his article ‘Ezra Pound and the Drafts of *The Waste Land*’:

‘I have done a rough draft of part III, but do not know whether it will do, must wait for Vivien’s opinion as to whether it is printable.’ (Ford Mark 2016)

She suggested him to remove some lines that seemed to be her personal. Still, in the final version of the poem, in the section titled A Game of Chess, mentally ill husband and wife resemble Eliots. Their following conversation throws light on the married life of Eliots:

“My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me.”

“I think we are in rats’ alley

Where the dead men lost their bones.” (Lines 111-114)

After reading these lines Vivien commented “Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful”

Similarly, Ezra Pound played a pivotal role in the editing of the original manuscript of *The Waste Land*. In reality, Eliot showed his sprawling text to him. He vigorously edited and cut almost half the length of the poem. Ford records the images of original manuscripts of *The Waste Land*, with Ezra Pound's annotations. He put on record how Pound writes 'OK' for appreciation 'STET' for 'Let it stand'. His notations included 'Too easy', and 'Perhaps be damned'. He extensively annotated in the margins of the sex scene between the typist and the young man. Ford points out that after much wheeling and scheming by both Eliot and Pound, the poem was published with the new title *The Waste Land* instead of the initial title *He Do The Police In Different Voices*.

Finally, the poem *The Waste Land* consisting of 433 lines divided into five sections appeared. All five sections portray the urban life of a city like London which is called 'The Unreal City'. *The Waste Landers* lead an immoral, mechanical, and untraditional life. For instance, 'April is the cruelest month' for them. They have a mechanical life as the following lines suggest:

The hot water at ten.

And if it rains, a closed car at four.

And we shall play a game of chess, (Lines 135-138)

The second part titled A Game Of Chess is highly autobiographical as it is largely based on the personal trauma faced by Eliot. Esty remarks:

Eliot was undergoing a breakdown in his moral compass, his emotions, in his intimate life. He found the poetic form that somehow manages to communicate to us intense personal distress and intense global distress...

So, it is also worth noticeable that how the private and public anguish of Eliot has been disseminated. Eliot divulges it through an innovative technique using allusions, quotations, references, myths symbols, etc. To support his idea of universalization of his intimate chaos through the poem, he borrowed the names of characters like Sosostris from Aldous Huxley's novel *Crome Yellow*; the title of the section A Game of Chess from Middleton's play *Women Beware Women*, the expression A broken Coriolanus from Shakespeare's play *Coriolanus*. He has inserted quotations from outstanding authors to

highlight the sameness of problems. The quotation from Wagner's Opera on the love of Tristan and Isolde fits into the scene of the hyacinth girl and her lover. Sometimes he even modifies the words of the quotation to suit the context. For instance, the words of the dirge in Webster's *The White Devil* have been changed. The original 'wolf' has been replaced by the 'dog' as 'dog' represents watchfulness and can rouse man to a sense of his spiritual tragedy. His unusual and original symbols have comprehensive importance such as the falling of the London Bridge does not merely refer to an incident but symbolizes the political and spiritual decay of modern Europe. The recurrent mythical symbols like winter stand for death, spring for rebirth, draught for spiritual barrenness, and rain for spiritual rebirth and productivity make the poem comprehensible.

Truly the poet refers to the past to find a parallel for the present as human nature is constant throughout the ages. He has mirrored human experiences beginning from pre-historic times, through Egyptian and Greek civilization to the modern 20th century. For example, sex perversions in modern and medieval ages are the same tragedy for guilty love portrayed in the story of Tristan and Isolde and the hyacinth girl of today. Still, there is a noticeable contrast between the girl of the 18th century and the modern typist girl. The girl who lost her virtue in Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* committed suicide; the modern girl after the sex feels no remorse; she merely takes it as a matter of routine and puts a record on the gramophone with automatic hand'.

In reality, the hectic activities of modern urban life rampant in modern society have been condensed by using myths, allusions, references, quotations, and symbols. The whole saga of human life has been telescoped from ancient times to the 20th century. He evaluates the present scenario from a historical perspective. In the past, fairies walked on the banks of river Thames, today prostitutes and call girls wander on the bank in search of sex. Earlier, the fairies washed their feet in the river water. But now in the modern wasteland, Mrs. Porter and her daughter 'wash their feet in soda water'.

In other words, Eliot again moves further flighting from personal to universal by connecting the modern wasteland with different wastelands of the past. Baudelaire's unreal city is not Paris but London. It spotlights the similarities between the past and present. It makes him understand that human experiences are more or less similar.

He feels that present discontents both personal and public can be apprehended by concatenating ancient and modern. Consequently, he finds that present problems can be solved with the methods of the past.

Therefore, he refers to one of the Hindu Upanishads where in a period of doubt and confusion men, angels and demons prayed to the creator. The almighty God replied through a divine thunder which uttered 'Da' thrice. Each group of men, angels, and demons interpreted it in their ways. Men said 'Da' means 'Datta' i.e. 'give' Demons uttered 'Da' which means 'Dayadhvam' which means 'sympathize'. Further, 'Da' for angels was 'Damyanta' meaning 'control'.

Then, Eliot realizes that a person can not reform the whole society. He derives another remedy from Dante i.e. self-purification. He feels that the society can be reformed with the effort of each individual. One must begin with oneself. To put it differently, the whole world can be rebuilt by the reformation of each person in the universe. Self-purification and self-discipline of each individual is the path to salvation for humanity.

The above-mentioned solution of self-reformation for man's salvation is relevant in the present world. The significance of *The Waste Land* for the present generation even after a century of its publication in 1922 can not be ignored. In the words of Esty:

It's very contemporary in terms of the world of sex and gender politics...Even more strikingly contemporary is the fact that this story is narrated from a transgender or intergender point of view. Eliot assumes the perspective of Tiresias, a famous mythological figure who transits back and forth between the position of man and woman. Eliot uses Tiresias' viewpoint to try to embed the intimate skirmishes of his tacky present into a whole civilization struggle over sex, going back to Ovid and Greek mythology.

It manifests that Eliot has universalized his trauma through the collage method using Tiresias as a mouthpiece. Tiresias is an all-knowing universal person who belongs to the past as well as the present. He is a link between the wasteland of modern civilization and the wasteland of ancient civilization. Moreover, it reveals that human anguish and suffering are universal. Human virtues and vices are almost the same in every

age. Hence the insights of earlier generations can help in drawing solutions as there is sameness of the problems despite distance in time and space. In other words, errors and mistakes of the past generation can guide the present generation.

Conclusion

The Waste Land by T. S. Eliot, an epic of human suffering is a fine instance of universalization of personal distress through the collage method spotlighting self-purification, self-control, and self-discipline as a panacea for individual human suffering drawn from the linkage between past and present. It is mandatory for the salvation of the whole humanity even in the present time in the 21st century, after a hundred years of the publication of *The Waste Land*, self-purification and self-discipline of each individual will lead to a better world. In a nutshell, it can be concluded that Eliot's flight from personal to universal makes us understand that the concatenation of antiquity and contemporaneity can be relevant to derive a solution to the present problems for a bright future for the whole universe including every individual. Certainly, Eliot is guided by ancient authors and the present world can be guided through Eliot's solution as he flights from personal to universal.

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Modern Malaises: A study of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*

Lovely

Abstract

This paper seeks to examine modern malaises like the emptiness of mind, sexual perversion, alienation and fragmentation, spiritual barrenness, estrangement, disillusionment, and industrialisation in the light of T. S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land'. The poem explores how people have become uprooted and hopeless in their life routines. The poem was written in 1922 but reveals the real picture of the near future. In today's world emotional and spiritual crises are the basic problems. Modern people do not have love, trust, hope, and morality. They are self-centered entrapped by the greed of money and power. T. S. Eliot suggests nourishing the dry roots of modern wasteland and regenerating a new and different world. An honest effort has been made to depict the real picture of today's society, to deconstruct the polluted discourse of the modern world, and to look for the remedy of love, trust, hope and good deeds suggested by T. S. Eliot in his greatest poem, 'The Waste Land'.

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Keywords

Modern world, Fragmentation, Alienation, Emptiness of minds, Frustration, Spiritual crisis, Love, Good deeds

Introduction

The present paper is an effort to reveal the problems and concerns portrayed in the poem, 'The Waste Land' which reflects the present age connecting antiquity with

the present world's situations. Eliot traces the hidden realities of today's world. T. S. Eliot shows idleness and emptiness of mind, estranged and fragmented modern life very successfully through the mechanism of split up. Reconstructing the structure of modernism, Eliot portrays a real presentation of modern malaises and seeks a finer solution like a prophet.

The poem explains that modern man is busy in their daily routine work. The church is empty which is the symbol of emptiness of modern people who are limited to themselves. They do not want to participate in societal situations. They are constrained to themselves and think that all the problems of life can be handled alone. Frustration, alienation, fragmentation, moral decay, and sex perversion are the results of the modern way of life of modern people. They are facing social, mental, and emotional crises and being suffocated by the tension, and anxiety created by their own hollowness of mind and irresponsive activities.

The article shows how the poem which depicts the idleness of modern life is a true picture of the present world. A path of emancipation is suggested in the last section of the poem through mythological allusions and symbols from Eastern and Western philosophies, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, scriptures, and books of many writers to rectify the society. The poem is a timeless journey of a person's daily routine activities where readers can relate to them and find a better solution.

Objectives

The main objective of this article to bring attention to modern malaises that have made the lives of modern people quite artificial, mechanical, boring, and robotic. After World War 1st, people were in shock, in fear of attacks that resulted in anxiety, mental disturbance, frustration, and confusion. Love for power, lust, and money had disturbed their minds. The research shows how these modern malaises prevalent at the time after World War First are not different from the present problems and situations and problems and need to be solved. Finding the remedy to the problem is the main goal of the research paper as suggested in the poem 'The Waste Land'.

Literature Review

Research papers and Critical studies on T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* have a number of aspects and perspectives. Chahal in his 'Revealing Ecological Concerns in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* through Eco-Critical Lens' describes ecological concerns, the relationship between the ideas, images, and language of the poem and the larger ecological condition of the early 20th century, worries about the environment problem, effects of human activity on the environment, rapid industrialization, the value of Eco-criticism to promote environmental awareness.

Ketevan JMUKHADZE in his research paper, 'Mythopoeic Image of the City in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*' has portrayed the landscape as a symbolic and suggestive artistic space. Multilayered structures, mythical methods, and prophets as central figures have been studied. Gwenda Koo discusses the fragmented consciousness of the alienated mind in his article named 'A Fragmented Poetic Consciousness in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*'. The researcher has focused on multiple perspectives of the individual consciousness, burden of existence, and search for salvation.

Mr. Rabichandan Kumar in *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot' is modern epic of the wasteland as the magnum opus of T. S. Eliot. The researcher has shown a wide range of themes, the saga of suffering with epic grandeur and, the mental journey of Tiresias from beginning to last.

Sanjana Plawat in her research 'April is the Cruellest Month: A Philosophical Inquiry into Humanity during the Corona Pandemic through T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*' studied the deep-rooted challenges of humanity in the wake of a pandemic like Corona. She has focused on how we can fight in Coronavirus-like situations and challenges with patience and solidarity.

Cyrena N. Pondrom in the paper 'T.S. Eliot: The Performativity of Gender in *The Waste Land*' has described the performance of gender through three crucial emotional scenes; the hyacinth girl episode, the first conversation in a Game of Chess and the silent confession to the friend in what the thunder said showing gender ambiguity.

Gaurab Sen Gupta in his study, 'Echoes of the Past: Revisiting Myths in T. S. Eliot's

The Waste Land shows the connection between the past and the present to convey some didactic purpose and the future of modern man. Walid Ali Ziater in 'Reality and Mythology, Convention and Novelty in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*' discusses Eliot's use of myth, allegory, and symbols to connect the past with the present. The researcher depicts that Eliot's use of classic literature was to show the present conditions and reality.

The present study discusses some particular modern malaises that relate to the present scenario and human problems with the suggestions to overcome evils and difficult situations through the great work of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

Research Methodology

The research is descriptive and analytical. The primary and secondary sources have been used to conduct this research paper and an honest attempt has been made to make the study qualitative.

Representation of Modern Malaises

The way of living life of modern people, depicted in *The Waste Land*, quite changed. Traditional values disappeared due to social and technical change. The assumptions of self, divine, and community became quite different from traditional ways of structuring. The main problems and concerns of mankind remain always the same. The vacuity of the modern world perfectly overlaps with the word created in *The Waste Land*.

The first section of *The Waste Land* is about numbness, death, unproductively laziness, and fleshy pleasure. Its opening line 'April is the cruelest month resembles the line used in 'The Canterbury Tales' but the difference is that Chaucer is optimistic while Eliot cries for the darkness of the modern age. Normally April is the month of fertility but the modern world has become dull and numb to such an extent that there is no hope of growing something even at the reach of the month, of April. Madam Sosostri is a fortune teller who tells the fortune with her Tarot Cards. When she says that she does not know the hanged man, it means that she does not believe in life beyond this world. This reveals the ignorance, backwardness, and insecurity of modern people who do not have any moral and religious guidance. Modern people are disconnecting from

others and feel alienated. When a person feels alone, he becomes suffocated resulting in self-criticism, sadness, irritation, and confusion. In ‘A Game of Chess’ suffering from neurotic disorder the lady speaks in confusion:

“My nerves are bad tonight. Yes bad. Stay with me
Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak” (Lines 111-112)

These lines suggest that expression of thoughts and interaction is most necessary in life. People might cure many mental diseases by sharing their views and expressing their internal feelings. At the end of the section, the speaker asks Stetson:

That corpse you planted last year in your garden
Has it begun to sprout?
Oh keep the dog far thence. (Lines 73-75)

The corpse under the earth is the symbol of hidden conscience and wisdom. People are in a rats’ race having no peace and comfort. But the lines also suggest the idea of rebirth and resurrection with the help of morality and Christianity.

Loveless sex and desire for money portrayed in the poem are similar to modern men’s condition having no hope and trust. The section ‘A Game of Chess’ shows lustful love and destructive desires. The pathetic condition of a lady because of the irresponsible behavior of her husband, the working-class Lil who is treated as a mere object of sex and advised to be ready to entertain her husband coming home after four years, reveals the loveless expectations of relationship and burdened sex. Lil has lost all her charm and glow because of continuous childbirth and responsibilities. In ‘The Fire Sermon’ lustful nymphs come over Thames and depart after satisfying. The river vanishes all the signs of their misdeeds that pollute the nature and environment as Eliot writes:

The river bears no empty bottle, sandwich papers
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends. (Lines 177-178)

The stories of two lovers, Tristan and Isolde, and a hyacinth girl depict the sensuous and guilty love. The poem explains how sex has become a robotic routine need without any moral and faithful commitment. It seems that modern people indulge in illegal relationships to find relief from routine life problems and concerns. Here it would be

fine to take the example of today's TV serials which boldly show these types of loveless relationships and sex perversion. The Disney hot star love story 'Dear Ishq' presents a metropolitan city, with people running after money, and fame. The famous character, the writer, Mr. Abhimanyu, shown as a fragmented character, seeks satisfaction through illicit love affairs and egoistic behavior. Modern people follow these things in the name of modernity in spite of learning a lesson. They are restricted to their own experiments, rules, desires, and own rights. They consider themselves free to do anything leaving their foundational values like honesty, loyalty, faithfulness, love, and trust. Eliot presents the reference of Antony and Cleopatra who became the reason for the destruction of their Empire because of their sensuous love.

Loveless love and fake relationships create alienation and fragmentation in modern people. Their emotions are scattered. Eliot uses the technique of split up to show the fragmented and disillusioned life of modern people. After World War I people, broken from their hearts, and finding no help in society, became selfish and egoistic to fulfill at first their needs rather than desires. They were the victims of the situation. But slowly and gradually greed has taken the place of sorrowful situations. Irregularity of lines, stanzas, rhyme, voices taken from many societal situations and personal life, disconnected speeches and passages, and complicated meanings symbolize the disconnected and complicated modern life which is also the same in the present world.

Fragmentation leads to alienation and alienation leads to irritation, and disconnection from others and that leads to spiritual barrenness. Spiritual barrenness upholds the main theme of the poem. The first section of the poem 'Burial of the Dead' shows unproductive land growing no plants because waste lenders do not want to make any effort to make it fertile. They are spiritually dead and not interested in awakening their souls who are sleeping in the warm season of winter. They love their daily routine and boring life. Madame Sosostris tells the future to superstitious people but she herself does not believe in the life hereafter. This shows modern people's insecurity and also reveals the suggestion that they should be inspired by great Eastern and Western preachings and Christianity not from fortune-telling tarot cards having no base and certainty. The section 'The Fire Sermon' shows the reference to good and pure nymphs who leave

their purity and make the river polluted. It symbolizes the modern people who ignore old and traditional values and prefer even the wrong paths to fulfill their wishes, dreams, and ambitions. They do not hesitate to do wrong deeds and frauds. Tricks and intrigues attract them to become successful.

Eliot highlights the spiritual numbness in people who have become so materialistic that they do not have time to connect with their creator, God, and nature. A modern man considers that science is the solution to every problem. He can handle everything with scientific knowledge but the biggest irony is that he is not happy keeping everything within his reach.

With the use of scientific experiments, he also mistreats the environment. The poem portrays that the modern man, insensitive towards purity and freshness of the air, doing rich business to earn money and fulfill his big dreams, takes high risks which spoils his future too. The use of oil and tar, the garbage like empty bottles, handkerchiefs, and cigarette ends contaminate the water, earth, and air. Modern industrial technologies also infect the environment.

The environment is also infected due to increased capitalism. Emotionally and spiritually dead modern people follow the robotic and mechanical routine. The present system is global economic. People want to have their private businesses and property. Madame Sosostris' business of Tarot cards, the nymphs' business at night on the Thames River, and Phlebus' death for business purposes show that people are totally blind to earning money. In such an economic system all want to gain profit and want private ownership. The red rock is the symbol of Christianity. The capitalist economy polluted the brains of modern men and created chaos, anarchy, and uprootedness. Lil's friend advises her to use cosmetic products to enhance her fake beauty for her husband. Piresius meets a German princess who is fond of physical pleasure and follows uprooted modern culture, and illegal relationships and is an example of faithlessness and guilty Love. Lil and Albert's loveless relationship, the seduction of the typist girl, Philomela's rape by the king, Tereus, the contamination of Thames River, and sexual abuse between lover and beloved portray venality and disloyalty. When Lil is unable to get her glow by cosmetics, it suggests that true love is the thing that is enough to enhance the beauty of

any relationship and to heal the emptiness and mental illness of modern man.

Seeking the Solution by the Use of Illusions and Symbols

The poem, 'The Waste Land' examines some modern malaises looking for regeneration and regaining what was lost in modern life. Eliot uses the technique of myth, and allusions to present religious darkness and disillusionment. The main purpose of using the mythological technique is to connect the past with the present. Using the mythical references, he seems to suggest if the regain of conscience and rebirth of dead life was possible in the past time with the help of Christianity and moral preaching of scriptures, it is quite possible to awaken the dead soul of modern man by learning traditional values and beliefs.

Myth

Myth is a traditional story that connects history to nature explaining social phenomena. Myth may be my created story. It may or may not be true. Supernatural beings or events are included in the myth. Eliot uses myths, allusions from all periods, and spheres as objective correlative.

Tiresias

Tiresias, a mythical hero, speaks about the shocking and ill condition after World War first. According to a mythical story, he saw two serpents copulating. Cursed by them he was transformed into a woman. Then he became blind by the Curse of the goddess Hera. He became blind having the prophetic vision. He experienced both sexes male and female. He also advised the kings Oedipus for penance to find regeneration. As a connection between the past and the present, he preaches for the awakening of conscience to remove sins.

Fisher King

T. S. Eliot alludes to Fisher King from Arthurian legend result whose Kingdom became Barren and dull because of the sin done by his soldiers. His soldiers raped the nuns of Chapel. The land of Fisher's king became cursed and barren. Fisher King, guarding the Holy Grail hopes that any noble person would come one day and save them from the

curse and the land would be fertile again. This suggests that the loss of culture, trust, and faith can be regained by purification and spirituality.

Vegetation and Fertility Myth

Vegetation God, buried beneath the soil, sprouts again as grain indicating the rebirth of modern life. The reference to Jesus Christ suggests the need for penance and sacrifice of evil things for the rebirth of all humanity. It also suggests if the sufferings of Jesus Christ could revive humanity in the past time then the sacrifice of desires and ill wishes can also purify modern life.

Biblical Wasteland

The land of Emmaus became unfertile because of the misdeeds of the land dwellers. Prophet Ezekiel advised them to find God's grace which resembles the idea of following the great preaching of great persons and books like Buddha, Christ, and Hindu scriptures.

Allusions to Dante's Divine Comedy

Eliot shows the crowd over London Bridge which is similar to the crowd in the section 'Inferno' of Divine Comedy. The sighs taken by people remind the sound made by pagans for god's grace. This allusion symbolizes wandering modern people aimlessly. Here the suggestion is to find God's grace by doing good deeds that can save humanity.

The title 'A Game of Chess' has been taken from Thomas Middleton's 'Women Beware Women'. It presents the seduction of a girl by the duke which presents the lustful desire of modern life. The allusion of Antony and Cleopatra is the symbol of sensuous love that became the reason for the destruction of the whole empire.

The title 'The Fire Sermon' is taken from Buddha's sermon to his disciples. He advises them to follow the path of truth and honesty to save them from the lustful desires of the modern world. This desire is similar to the hellfire with which the present world is burning.

The mythical allusion of the Phoenix bird symbolizes the idea of rejuvenation and regeneration. The reference to two lovers from Wagner Opera, Tristan, and Isolde also overlaps the modern lustful desires Philomela, taken from Greek mythology, raped by

her brother-in-law, King Tereus, transformed into a nightingale is the symbol of the illegal, forced relationship of modern society:

The change of Philomel by the barbarous king
So rudely forced... (Lines 99-100)

The section 'Death by water' has an allusion to a drowning sailor from the 'Tempest' that indicates the moral and spiritual decay and the need for upliftment. Sibyl, a mythological character, was granted eternity but she was fed up with the destruction and loss of time and hopes for resurrection after death. This suggests the cycle of life and death. Nobody can be saved from this. Buddhist philosophy in the section, 'What the Thunder Said', the speaker requests to God:

Burning burning burning burning
O Lord thou pluckest me out (Lines 308-309)

Here Eliot is crying to see the horrible state of his countrymen. Like a prophet, he requests God to save his humanity from the fire of sin, lust, and money. The situation of the present world is also similar to the burning man in 'The Waste Land'. He suggests that only God and the path of Christianity, and morality can save modern man from this fire.

Thus myth, allusions, and symbols used by the poet, unifying the antiquity with the present, guide the wandering humanity and present solutions to the problems to which all human beings can relate because the basic problems remain always the same. It becomes quite possible to fertile the wasteland through the proper guidance and the formula of three DA, Datta, Dayadhavam, and Damyata suggested by T S Eliot to find peace and real happiness.

In four sections of the poem, the poet presents modern malaises which are relevant to the present situation. But in the second section 'What the thunder said' he presents a Vedantic philosophy. The cleansing rain is the symbol of cleaning all the sins. It is the symbol of enlightenment and awakening of sleeping humanity for so long-time revelation of truth and awakening time. The time of awakening and realization of truth is suggested by the crawling of Cock. A new beginning, a new morning without

darkness of mind is indicated as a remedy for problems. He advises to follow the 3 DA formula, Datta to give, Dayadhavam to sympathize, Damyata to self-control, and the path of Shantih.

Conclusion

The Waste Land is a true presentation of modern disintegration, frustration, corruption, sin, and sexual perversion and with the help of mythical allusions suggests a path of truth and regeneration alluding to Hinduism, Christianity, Upanishad and prosperous preachings of ancient preachers like Buddha, Christ, Tiresias. He tries to save his humanity from the fire of modern malaises.

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Loss of Traditional Value and Spiritual Emptiness in *The Waste Land*

Dr. Lalita Gaur & Mrinal Mudgil

Abstract

The Waste Land by T. S. Eliot came in an era of heightened anxiety. The loss of traditional values was the cause behind this spiritual emptiness. The industrial advancement and technological developments which were considered as the progress of the country, actually brought with it a spiritual uncertainty within the society. The poet depicts the diseased society after the First World War. One of the after-effects of this war upon European society was spiritual and moral chaos. The poet asks 'What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow Out of this stony rubbish?' (Eliot, *The Waste Land*, 1922) thus the poem reflects the disillusionment and the bareness of the post-war generation. The present paper aims to analyse the reason behind the loss of traditional values, and how spirituality can be restored in the 21st century.

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Keywords

Spirituality, Barrenness, Isolation, Anxiety, Disillusionment

Introduction

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born on the 26th of September, 1888 in Saint Louis, Missouri. He was a brilliant student with a wide range of interests. He graduated from Harvard with a degree in philosophy in 1909 and went on to study at various universities in the US and Europe. He had some close relationships with the poet Ezra Pound, and in 1915 he married the Englishwoman Vivien Hough-Wood. Eliot settled in London and wrote

for literary magazines, worked at a bank called Lloyds, and taught at schools. He was unhappy in his marriage, which contributed to the gloomy atmosphere of his poetry in the 1910's and 1920's, his most famous poem, *The Waste Land* (1922), was a reflection of the despair that followed World War I

The Waste Land by T. S. Eliot is a 20th-century poem written during a period of disillusionment and cultural transformation in the wake of World War I. It portrays social decay, religious crisis, and disruption of traditional beliefs. It presents a society grappling with cultural shifts and a lack of religious faith through references to other cultures. At the same time, political instability and economic hardship heightened the atmosphere of uncertainty. As a seminal work of modernism, Eliot's work captures the complexity and disarray of the early 20th-century political and social environment.

Being a realist, Eliot depicted society in *The Waste Land* in a realistic manner. Eliot refers to April as the 'cruellest month' in *The Waste Land* because, in Sarah Coleridge's words, it 'brings the primrose sweet, scatters daises at our feet.' He declared that 'April is the cruellest month, breeding lilacs out of the dead land, mixing memory and desire, stirring dull route with spring rain' (Eliot, 1922). Unlike other poets, Eliot does not see daisies and primroses here. He just sees a barren landscape. The only thing that brightens the dull paths is the spring rain. The poem was written after World War I. It describes the social breakdown, the destruction, the death, and the desolation of society. It was a period of spiritual void and despair. The poem is a reflection of the generational pain caused by the war, both at home front and on the battlefield.

Impact of World War I

The World War I resulted in the rise of Adolf Hitler and the rise of the Soviet communist regime, the formation of nation-states, the promotion of independence movements in Europe's colonies, and the total destruction of empires. A lot of families lost their homes and had to move. Not many families had any losses at the end. A friend or a family member would have suffered a loss if all the families had made it home. It is conceivable that a small town lost the majority of its young men, and the grief was shared throughout the nation. The loss of traditional values resulted from the loss of religious belief among the war veterans, as the society had been based on these traditional values prior to the outbreak of the First World War. The poet's focus has been on the decay and dissolution of society, and the psychological and spiritual hardship endured by individuals during

the post-war period has resulted in a spiritual emptiness.

Contrast of Past and Present

The first section of the poem presents a comparison between past and present in the lines

And when we were children, staying at the archduke's,
My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
In the mountains, there you feel free.
I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter. (Lines 15-18)

The post-war period, however, is different. Civilization is characterized by a general state of emotional emptiness. Post-war people are physically present but mentally inert, enduring the same activities on a daily basis. The following sentences reflect this emotional emptiness.

You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. (Lines 21-24)

This poem is all about the psychological damage caused by the war. The people and the country are dead and this dead culture has lost all the things that would keep it going. The stuff the characters do in the poem is so boring and boring. Even when it comes to romantic stuff, it's all about love and passion. For instance, the romantic encounter described in the poem is without emotion 'Endeavours to engage her in caresses, Which still are unreprieved, if undesired.' (Eliot, 1922), these lines throw light upon the sexual relation between the post-war men and women. For them, the encounter was an ordinary affair as he says,

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
Hardly aware of her departed lover;
Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:
'Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over. (Lines 250-253)

Materialism : A Cause of Spiritual Barrenness

Materialism is another factor that contributes to the spiritual emptiness of society after the war. The poet mocks at the modern society. 'A heap of broken images' is actually the image of a shattered society. Dead tree does not give him shade and the cricket gives him no relief. The poet wants to say that the materialistic man has distanced himself from Mother Nature and therefore cannot get peace anywhere.

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.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet. (Lines 61-65)

In the above lines, Tiresias is depicting London city which is under fog. 'Fog' here symbolises materialism. 'It shows how materialistic forces control all aspects of society. Materialism has frozen the minds of people.' (Philip 2021)

'Sigh' here symbolises the inner emptiness which resulted due to the excessive materialistic attitude of people.

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Glowed on the marble, where the glass
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines
From which a golden Cupidon peeped out
(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)
Doubled the flames of seven-branched candelabra
Reflecting light upon the table as
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it, (Lines 77-84)

The poet here gives the message that these materialistic people search for happiness in luxurious things. They do not know that it is taking away their peace of mind. The poet highlights the fact that in spite of such a luxurious life, the modern man is devoid of true happiness and life has become dull and monotonous. The poem talks about the emptiness of those who value luxury and surround themselves with material possessions. 'The futility of materialistic life is among the common topics addressed by Eliot in his writings, which often serves to highlight the spiritual degeneration of people

and communities.’ (Abbas 2016)

It is clear from the writings of T. S. Eliot that as human society becomes more and more focused on worldly activities, it begins to drift further and further away from the realm of spirituality. These spiritually barren individuals seek satisfaction in worldly material possessions and fail to recognize that this desire only leads to sadness. Therefore, if one desires to be free of suffering, they must give up their desires.

The hot water at ten.

And if it rains, a closed car at four.

And we shall play a game of chess,

Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door. (Lines 135-139)

The above-mentioned lines clearly conclude that materialism leads to spiritual barrenness.

Loss of Faith and Moral Values

Church attendance has also become a normal part of life after the First World War, materialistic society has pretty much lost any sense of morality or faith. Society has deteriorated because of this loss of morality and faith.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Eliot’s examination of the decline of religious belief in *The Waste Land* is the overwhelming feeling of spiritual emptiness. This dichotomy of spring’s rebirth with a sense of cruelty and death serves as the poem’s springboard for exploring the spiritual aridity of the modern world. Eliot claims that conventional religious beliefs and morality have been compromised by the atrocities of war and the moral decay of civilization.

And upside down in the air were towers

Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours

And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells. (Lines 382-384)

These materialistic individuals lack empathy or a sense of compassion; they only think of their own benefits. They are trapped in the prisons they constructed for themselves, and their ability to escape is becoming increasingly difficult. Eliot also contemplates the deterioration of social trust and human development. He paints a bleak picture of a society inhabited by dissident individuals who are unable to connect with one another

and find meaning in their lives. References to the golden age of the past are juxtaposed against the barrenness of the present, conveying a sense of decay and frustration.

We think of the key, each in his prison
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison
Only at nightfall, aethereal rumours
Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus. (Lines 412-415)

In order to illustrate the spiritual divide, Eliot uses mythology, religious texts, and literary references. He refers to the biblical story of the Fisher King whose ruined land is a metaphor for a society that suffers from spiritual decay. The figures of Tiresias and Madam Sosostriis in the poem also represent a society that has lost its sense of spirituality and no longer adheres to traditional beliefs.

The era also saw a lot of materialism and selfishness, where people got caught up in their own little lives and got caught up in getting things done quickly and at the cost of their moral and spiritual well-being. In the famous words, 'I'll show you fear with a dust-coated hand', Eliot talks about how empty life can be when there's no moral value in it, and how pointless it all is.

DA DA DA

The final part of *What The Thunder Said* argues that only a revival of religious faith can revive civilization. The story of two travellers serves as a metaphor for how religion can catalyse human advancement. The three words *DA DA DA* open the door to spiritual renewal in modern society.

First *DA* means *Datta*, which suggests that people must dedicate themselves to the welfare of mankind. The second *DA* means *Dayadhavam* (to sympathize) which means that people must sympathize with others. The third *DA* means *Damyata*, which means control over one's desires, which leads to satisfaction and spiritual bliss.

Eliot here makes allusions to the *Upanishads*, sacred texts for Hinduism and Buddhism. When Brhma was asked how to achieve inner peace, he answered with a mantra 'DA DA DA'. T. S. Eliot uses the teachings of *the Upanishads* for the welfare of mankind. He raises the hope of revival of the society with the weapon of unselfishness. When people work for the interest of others a selfless society will take birth and when people

will learn to sympathize with one another and this newly born society will become more peaceful. The third mantra, Damyata teaches us to control our senses. When a man controls his arrogance, his lust, and his desires his faith will be revived in God and he will be able to take full control of his life. Thus with the key of 'DA DA DA', modern man can get freedom from the self-created prison of isolation

Conclusion

The Waste Land is a modernist poem by T. S. Eliot that documents the decline of traditional values in the post-war period. It portrays a world in moral decay through fragmentary narratives and cultural references. The poem portrays a society in which traditional values have been shattered, leaving individuals spiritually bereft. It emphasizes the disintegration of social conventions and expresses a sense of sorrow and frustration. This poem serves as a powerful reminder of the need to find meaning and redemption in a fractured and perplexed society, particularly in the face of contemporary cultural and moral crises.

The poem also explores the spiritual emptiness of a fractured society in the aftermath of World War I. It portrays a world that has lost its traditional values and sense of connection through various voices and cultural references. The themes of depravity, dissatisfaction, and the pursuit of spiritual renewal allude to the emptiness of the soul. The poem's themes of spiritual despair are reflected in figures such as the Fisher King, as well as metaphorical settings such as the barren plain. This poem is a powerful reflection of the spiritual emptiness of the twentieth century, as it invites readers to contemplate the emptiness of modern life and the quest for spiritual fulfillment in an environment that is becoming increasingly distant and unpredictable.

The most famous poet of the 20th century depicted the devastation brought on by the First World War in his masterwork *The Waste Land*, as well as the means by which this loss and the materialistic society may be restored. 'The Waste Land is a highly condensed epic of the modern age' (Brooks 1937). The first three parts explain why we've lost our traditional values and spirituality. We've lost our faith in morality, we've been sexually abused, we've had bad relationships, we've been selfish, and we've been driven by our need to make money. The last part tells us how we'll get back to our way of life. Eliot says that if we want to restore our confidence in our traditional values, we

need to be disciplined. Self-discipline is the only way to get our civilisation back on track. He says we need to start disciplining ourselves. Purifying ourselves is a great way to bring spirituality back into our lives.

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Nature Imagery in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land: An Ecocritical Approach*

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Abstract

The twentieth century is a modern era of drastic changes, a culmination of industrialization and commercialization leading to the birth of many sciences, neglecting spirituality and Faith and threatening and pushing humanity to the marginalized status. T.S. Eliot's poetry bears a true reflection of the existential dilemma in which modern man has most paradoxically got trapped. It reveals the deterioration and decadence of human civilization; religion and spirituality that shaped the unstructured and brute primitive men appear frail today because we have learnt how to wear a fair mask and hide the dilapidated face behind it. The Waste Land (1922), no doubt a classic of the modern era, has garnered admiration and appreciation internationally for locating the cracks and fissures on the glossy surface of civilization and urban culture. Apart from criticising the crude cityscape, growing materialism, and spiritual aridity, the poem is replete with natural imagery in all five parts supposedly hinting at the impending ecological crisis we are facing in the twenty-first century. The imagery like the river sweating oil and tar used in 'The Waste Land' suggests severe environmental crisis, pollution, and urban sprawl threatening the ecology of the earth. Beginning with spring and April and ending with water and thunder, The Waste Land uses natural imagery to portray the existential crisis and degeneration in the cityscape and can be interpreted from an eco-critical standpoint. Industrialization and materialism have not only brought disaster to human civilization but have also affected the ecosystem and climate. This paper aims to explore the natural imagery in 'The Waste Land', especially in Part 1 and Part 5, exposing the reality amidst the gloom and disaster and evaluating its relevance today from the eco-critical and environmental angle.

Keywords

Culture, Civilization, Commercialisation, Ecocriticism, Ecology, Imagery

Introduction

Definition of Ecocriticism

The term 'ecocriticism' is the study of literature from an ecological perspective showing a deep concern for the environmental crisis due to human intervention. It investigates that all plants, animals, and humans are closely interrelated to one another, and literature is part of a vastly complex global system where there is an interaction between matter, energy, and ideas. It is also called environmental criticism or green studies. It can also be called the subjugation of green culture and ethics by human culture and ethics. Ecocritics focuses on issues such as how nature is represented in a work of literature, the role of physical setting in the development of the plot of a novel or story, or the extent of ecological awareness of a play. They sensitize the reader helping them to consider nature as an equally important critical category along with considerations such as race, class, and gender. They also raise the issues of global environmental crisis. It is believed that literature can play a pivotal role in curbing this ecocrisis.

Nature writing refers to the authors' awareness of the major role that nature plays in this world portraying the intimate, realistic, and detailed description of natural settings and the geographical features of a region. Representation of the natural environment has been frequently done in many works of literature for many centuries. James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1726-30) conveys the 'nostalgic view of a return to unspoiled nature to restore a lost simplicity and concord' (Abrams 81). Gilbert White's *Natural History and Antiquities of Selbourne* (1789) is about the affectionate observations of wildlife. Rousseau's appeal and Wordsworth and other romantic poets find in Nature the ameliorating capacity to heal the inner trauma missing in the cityscape and impart aesthetics and ethics. Henry David Thoreau's *Walden or Life in the Woods* (1854) proves him a naturalist in the most vital sense, for he has 'named the birds without a gun.' In the twentieth century, two books that first drew our attention towards the environmental degradation and devastation of wildlife inflicted by newly developed chemical pesticides are Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* (1949) and Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962). It began to be realized how urbanization, industrialization, and the development of chemical pesticides have caused great damage to the ecosystem.

The explosion of the human population has caused deforestation.

The term, ecocriticism, was first coined by William Ruechert in his essay 'Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism' (1978) who proposes 'the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature, because ecology (as a science, as a discipline, as the basis for the human vision) has the greatest relevance to the present and future of the world we all live in...' (Ruechert 107). Thereafter, in the 1980s the ecocritical approach has its inception to be used to study literature and to focus on the concerns for environmental crisis due to the discord brought to the ecosystem by human intervention. In 1985, Frederick O. Waage edited a book, *Teaching Environmental Literature: Material, Methods, Resources* foster 'a greater presence of environmental concern and awareness in literary disciplines.' (Waage viii) In 1991, Harold Fromm organized MLA special session entitled 'Ecocriticism: The Greening of Literary Studies' to explore further in this new area of study the relationship between literature and the physical environment, which requires looking at literary studies through a green lens. In 1992, the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) was formed in America seeking to inspire and promote intellectual work in environmental humanities and arts. The Association aims at promoting 'the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to literature that considers the relationship between human beings and the natural world.' (Quoted in Glotfelty viii) It also 'encourages new nature writing, traditional and innovative scholarly approaches to environmental literature, and interdisciplinary environmental research.' (Quoted in Glotfelty viii) Thus ecocriticism brought a new scope and hope to study literature from the ecocritical angle and develop a bridge between nature and literature because humans have no alternative to shifting to some other planet where they can hardly find a beautiful and eco-friendly biosphere.

Various Critical and Theoretical Approaches to *The Waste Land*

After heavy editing by Ezra Pound, Eliot's *The Waste Land* was published by the *Criterion* in October 1922 and by the *Dial* in December 2022. It has created a ripple in the silent stream of poetic current setting an important landmark in World English poetry. Due to its complex poetic structure, it got a mixed reception after its publication. Earlier the poem was criticised by Louis Untermeyer who called it 'a pompous parade of erudition, a lengthy extension of the earlier disillusion, a kaleidoscopic movement in

which the bright-coloured pieces fail to atone for the absence of an integrated design.’ (Untermeyer 453). The *Times Literary Supplement* commented, ‘It is parodying without taste or skill.’ Amy Lowell remarked, ‘It is a piece of trite.’ F.L. Lucas opines that the poem is ‘the parodies are cheap and the imitations are inferior’ (Quoted in Kenner 33). In an essay, ‘The Lyric Impulse in T.S. Eliot’s Poetry’, Alec H. Brown observes that the poem is ‘morbidly attracted for urban squalor’. (Quoted in Maxwell) Clive Bell wrongly criticised Eliot for lack of imaginative faculty of mind, ‘If you will read carefully Eliot’s three longer poems – ‘Prufrock’, ‘Gerontion’, and *The Waste Land* – I think you will see what I mean (even if you do not agree with me) in saying that he has been more or less repeating himself. And here we come at Eliot’s essential defect. He lacks imagination...’ (Bell 772)

Later, *The Waste Land* was increasingly appreciated for its truthful reflection of the trauma, vacuity, sterility, and inertia in the post-war urbanized and nature-deprived modern society where devastation conveys more meaning and sense than the vernal freshness of the sweet green land. I think the poem is a highly condensed epic of the modern age (maybe a true reflection of *Kalyug*). It contains the power of phrasing, scything irony, mythopoetic mechanics, intertextuality, the monologic tone of Tiresias functioning like heteroglossia, and a testament to a depleting sense of morality both towards man and nature. Helen McAfee observes that ‘To students of psychology, the method of procedure in *The Waste Land* must be highly significant. Impressions, fragments of experience, and memories of other men’s writings drift through the author’s consciousness at the bidding of the subconscious.’ (McAfee 227). I.A. Richards highly appreciated the poem compared to an epic, ‘Allusion in Mr Eliot’s hands is a technical device for compression. *The Waste Land* is the equivalent in content to an epic. Without this device, twelve books would have been needed... An original poem, as much as a new branch of mathematics, compels the mind which receives it to grow, and this takes time.’ (Richards) Richards provided a name for the technique Eliot used in the poem ‘Music of Ideas. The ideas are of all kinds: abstract and concrete, general and particular; like musician’s phrases, they are arranged, not that they may tell us something, but that their effects on us may combine into a coherent whole of feeling and attitude and produce a peculiar liberation of the will.’ (Quoted in Miller 157) These observations and critical appreciations establish T.S. Eliot as an iconic figure in the twentieth century and *The Waste Land* as a classic in modern poetry.

In the twenty-first century, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* began to be observed as an ecocritical text. The poem appeals to many critics and scholars about how detachment from nature and attachment to materialism caused an ecological crisis. In *The Nature of Modernism* (2017), Elizabeth Black observes that *The Waste Land* is an important subject of ecocriticism because it introduces new ways of writing about environmental change that rejuvenates the poetry of place and reasserts the continued importance of nature to modern poetry. To her, the poem is a disturbing vision of society 'estranged from nature and on the brink of environmental collapse' strongly substantiating the idea of environmental catastrophe. (Black 2017) In his essay, 'The Waste Land as Ecocritique' published in *The Cambridge Companion to The Waste Land* (2015), Gabrielle McIntire analyses the poem from an ecocritical perspective. In 'Ecomythic Reading of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*', Geoffrey Berry considers it a visionary poem and extends his view, 'T. S. Eliot's yearning to retain faith in transcendental regenerative forces leads him to seek his Grail in the dissolution of forms. This is the place where the luminal mysteries of ritual revivify, such that we regain some sense of relationship with the rest of nature beyond the civilized and alienating habits of mastery, consumption, and profit.' (Berry 12) Berry focuses on how civilized people have alienated themselves from nature forgetting its role to persist humans on earth. Another essay that also points out the ecological concern is Shibaji Mridha's 'The Water Ethics: An Elemental-Ecocritical Reading of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*'. Mridha attempts to explore the water ethics in the poem and develops her notion of revenge for the thing. To her, *The Waste Land* is 'a carrier of environmental ethic that can remind us to show respect to nature and disown extreme human hubris.' (Mridha 109) These eco/critical observations explore more possibilities to rediscover and rethink T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* in a new setting with all its relevance to the current affairs and concerns about the environmental and ecological crisis we are facing in the twenty-first century.

Nature Imagery in *The Waste Land*: An Ecocritical Approach

It would be odd to refer to T. S. Eliot as a nature poet, an ecocritical poet, or a poet having a leaning toward environmental crisis. He has never shown his concern for the ecological or environmental crisis. His appears purely to be city poetry creating the cityscape with perverted imagery of nature. He has consistently focused on the deterioration of moral values and the degeneration of humanity. This deterioration

began when, after the Renaissance in Europe, man became more eager to explore new realms of experience, new lands, and new ways to make life more beautiful and more comfortable. This intent of exploration and the need to redefine human needs laid the foundation of industrialization, trade and commerce, and scientific inventions. We drifted away from nature despite the symbolic warning issued by Rousseau and the Romanticists. Our reasoning and arid thinking hardly make any way back to have any concern for nature or the ecosystem except few scholars and authors who have been mentioned at the beginning of this paper.

The phrase, *The Waste Land* proposes a grim and gloomy depiction of the post-war setting. Contrary to the green and healthy vision that soothes and lulls our senses and helps us to escape to the Lake Isle of Innisfree, the poem, *The Waste Land*, creates an alienated imagery of nature lacking in Romanticized notion and aesthetic excellence. The scenes of devastation and a parade of parodies and allusions observed and correlated by the mythical character, Tiresias, in the modern world reiterate how we lack coherence, order, and balance everywhere because 'the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief, / And the dry stone no sound of water.' (Eliot 53) The surface examination of the poem helps us reflect on the spiritual vacuity, the failure of religion to curb the growing desire-bound needs of man, and the dearth of morality in the modern world. But, the poem is replete with nature imagery though perverted and dull, symbolically rich and futuristic. Beginning with the April Spring shower and ending with the thunder and water, *The Waste Land* appears to contribute to the history of nature writing and revealing concern for the disconnectedness between man and nature. Throughout the five parts, 'The Burial of the Dead', 'The Game of Chess', 'The Fire Sermon', 'Death by Water' and 'What the Thunder Said', the poet unromantically and mechanically uses nature imagery to portray the grim reality in a surreal urban setting where the mythical character Tiresias, symbolizing the stream of human consciousness, visits the modern wasteland, and begins to recollect and correlate the natural disasters when the doomed fates of King Oedipus and Fisher King converted their kingdoms into the wastelands. Denial of ethical values led to doom and disaster, and so happens today when humans neglect ecological ethics and green culture. We learn the essence of charity (*data*), self-restraint (*damyata*), and compassion (*dayadhvam*) from our scriptures, but do not practise them toward our ecosystem.

The first part, 'The Burial of the Dead', opens with an allusion to Chaucer's *General Prologue* reflecting a sharp contrast between the fourteenth and the twentieth century. Tiresias, the ubiquitous narrative voice, may also symbolize the ecocritical consciousness. He can read the mind, look into our unconscious realm of thought, and correlate the gap between the past and the present. The rich lush greenery of Chaucer's time is missing today. Modern man has forgotten to appreciate the beauty of nature. April blessed with spring rain, blossoms of lilacs, and harbinger of youthful summer is superlatively referred to as 'the cruellest month' because the spring rain tends to stir 'dull roots'. This negligence and denial of the laws of nature and the entire ecosystem can also be seen in the twenty-first century where we are losing the forest areas, the clean potable water, and the pristine green culture devoid of desire-bound human intervention. Though Eliot employs this natural imagery to expose the void and vacuity of human ethics and metaphysics, he indirectly hints at the disconnectedness and separateness between man and nature. There is also the scene of the snow-covered mountain not offering scenic beauty, but rather providing an apposite setting for illicit love relation between cousins, 'Marie, hold on tight. And down we went. In the mountains, there you feel free.' (Eliot 53)

The scene of utter disaster and ecological crisis is reflected in the following lines, 'What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow / Out of this stony rubbish?', 'the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief, / And the dry stone no sound of water.' (Eliot 53) Our growing needs and blind material pursuit have created an ironic situation. If we recall Thomas Gray's 'An Elegy' which is also set in the burial of the dead in the remote rural background, we feel emotionally distracted with the philosophical truth of life. The idyllic background of the poem conveys to us the nurture of man by nature. But, in the modern era, the current of water and green shelter are rare scenes, and our pseudo-ethical values aggravate our earth's environmental crisis. This part also refers to Wagner's opera, *Tristan and Isolde*, which tells a medieval romance of the ill-fated love affair between the knight Tristan and the lady Isolde. When Tristan was escorting the captured Isolde, the lines 'Fresh blows the wind/ For home; / My Irish child, / Where do you tarry?' (Eliot 54) through natural imagery stimulate the soothing effect of nostalgia which the metropolitan imagery can hardly convey. The opera also narrates the secret love relation between the two which has purity, renunciation, and eternity. But, the modern wastelanders make physical contact out of no true love. Guilt and

shame characterise modern man's predicament of living in emotional crisis through the imagery of the hyacinth girl. Directly or indirectly the first part proposes an anarchic ecological situation where the earth will suffer for want of love and hope, nature will be exhibited as some great, well-adorned parks, and man will be in queue to ride to some sanctuary where the wild animals shall be on display as we see in the African Safari.

The famous clairvoyant, Madam Sosotris, has a close affinity with the twenty-first century high-profile astrologers enjoying celebrity status. They are the perverted humans creating personal myths out of the ancient mythologies and scriptures and claim their pseudo-knowledge most truthful and fruitful. Even they claim their knowledge beyond the universal and ecological system. Madam Sosotris is an anti-nature and anti-ecological figure, her approach to making prophecy and fortune-telling deprives man of being environmentalist and nature-loving. The phrase 'Unreal City', borrowed from Charles Baudelaire's 1857 poem, 'The Seven Old Men', refers to London, a city marred by commercialism and materialism. Due to the lack of green vegetation and green culture, monotony, and moribund habits reign supreme there. To an ecocritic, this place would be a laboratory where he/she can investigate how estrangement from nature and the ecosystem can transform a fertile land into the burial of the dead. Thus we can apprehend that the section, 'The Burial of the Dead' has nature imagery but it is perverted to suit Eliot's vision of waste land which also predicts the impending environmental crisis in the near future.

Other sections of *The Waste Land* have also multiple images drawn from the natural world. 'The Game of Chess' is marked for total dearth of nature imagery, the scene is set in a rich lady's bed chamber and then in a restaurant. Humans are like 'dull roots' enjoying their aridity, dryness, and dullness. 'The Fire Sermon' is an eco critique of debris of pollution and litter often left by city dwellers. They lack a sense of protecting nature and water bodies. The scene of the Thames River whose banks are often littered with 'empty bottles, sandwich papers,/ Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends' creates a horrendous situation of ecological crisis. Today, the report says that India generates about 62 million tonnes of waste each year. The great Pacific Garbage Patch is a collection of marine debris in the North Pacific Ocean which is litter that ends up in oceans, seas, and other large bodies of water. This is how we have created havoc out of an approach to industrialization, urbanization, and technological advancement.

Very soon, our world will also be thwarted by the e-waste and digital data waste that contributes to carbon emissions around the world.

The final section, 'What the Thunder Said', glances at the message, which was proclaimed in the voice of thunder, for the deliverance of society from the grip of spiritual sterility. The main symbol of the movement is the journey undertaken for the realization of a moral or spiritual goal. This section also contains nature imagery, such as 'reverberation / Of thunder of spring over distant mountains', 'no water but only rock', 'mountains of rock without water', 'Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth', 'dry sterile thunder without rain', 'dry grass singing' and 'Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves / Waited for rain, while the black clouds / Gathered far distant, over Himavant.' (Eliot 66-68). Eliot here refers to the crucifixion of Christ, the Arthurian legend, and the Upanishadic philosophy of life to develop the concept of the essence of good life, the significance of deliverance, and the eternity of spiritual and moral values. However, the ecocritical reading of the poem suggests that the ecological dilemma and dearth of water are primarily caused due to the decline in our ethical values. Apart from the concept of sterile spirituality of modern wasteland, the water crisis has become a severe problem today. UNICEF reports that four billion people (almost two-thirds of the world's population, experience severe scarcity of water at least one month each year. Over two billion people live in countries where water supply is inadequate. Half of the world's population could be living in areas facing water scarcity by as early as 2025. By 2040, roughly 1 in 4 children worldwide will be living in areas of extremely high water stress. The images, 'no water but only rock' (Eliot-332) and 'mountains of rock without water,' (Eliot-335) connote the environmental crisis that T. S. Eliot might have unknowingly prophesied. His phrases appear to be highly ecocritical and issue a warning for a future with scarcity of water. Once rivers which had caused many civilizations to sprout on their banks are now suffering from a dearth of water because of human intervention, building of dams, commercialization of water, growing urbanization, and over-consumption of ground water.

Conclusion

To sum up, *The Waste Land* is a modern testament to the spiritual wasteland where the imagery drawn from nature focuses our attention on the ecological crisis due to population explosion, deforestation, sprawling urban boundaries, decreasing wildlife

and forest areas, and the encroachment of forest lands. The depleting forest areas and giant mechanical anti-green development have heinously affected the ecosystem, and the balance between nature and the physical world has been lost. Literature can play a vital role in instilling into us awareness and reawakening through poetic idioms and phrases, to learn the new boundary of human understanding, to penetrate our soul deeper and deeper to protect and preserve this biosphere. We have only this earth and we have no alternative to go beyond it. We know that one day this earth will be extinct, but we should not be the cause of its extinction. I believe that ecocriticism has done a tremendous job of preparing an academic platform where we at least hold a discourse for a sound relationship between man, nature, and literature. Nature can fulfill our needs, but not our greed. And we should never forget 'Nature never did betray / The heart that loved her...' (Wordsworth 54-55), but our life's irony is that 'Little we see in nature that is ours' (Wordsworth 120). This is an environmental message that is relevant to us of all ages.

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Voice of the East in Eliot and Oppenheimer

Dr. Uma Maheswari Viswanathan & Sangeetha. K

Abstract

This paper presents the influence of the mystic East in providing answers to some of the daunting ethical questions that haunted Westerners during the era of world wars. TS Eliot and Oppenheimer who admits the influence of Waste Land on him are taken for the study. Bhagavad Gita the emblematic Sanskrit text that appears in the epic Mahabharata, Vedas, and Upanishads has influenced poets and philosophers like Whitman, Emerson, Thoreau, Eliot, etc. as well as scientists like Oppenheimer, Heisenberg, Schrodinger, Tesla, etc. The references to Sanskrit texts cannot be taken as mere decorations or indulgence in exoticism; the messages are organically incorporated into their words, actions, and whole lives. In 'The Waste Land', the Upanishad is quoted explicitly while the theme of the Bhagavad Gita is used implicitly in the juxtaposition of life and death and treatment of sensual pleasures and means to control senses. Karmayoga or doing one's duty in a detached manner gave strength to Oppenheimer who directed the project of building the Atomic Bomb which he knew would be used on the enemies. The message of Lord Krishna in Gita gave him the notion of duty/dharma and renunciation of the fruits of his action gave him the thrust to make a weapon of mass destruction.

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Keywords

Eliot, Oppenheimer, Waste Land, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita

Introduction

The modern period characterized by numerous scientific theories, inventions, philosophies, art movements, and music has been influenced by Eastern philosophy,

be it Hinduism, Buddhism, or Taoism. On one side Darwin's Theory of Evolution and Einstein's Theory of Relativity brought traces of disbelief in scriptures in the human mind and on the other side the horrors of the two world wars painted the creative minds of the era with pessimism and desperation. The novel concepts of human identity, experience, time, reality, and existence needed a new perspective, ideology, and belief system for better understanding. At this juncture, global travel facilitated intellectual exchange between the East and the West enabling the seekers to find solutions in the voices of the East. The intersection of the Western mind and the Eastern philosophy helped the creative minds to add new dimensions to their work for better understanding.

Creative minds of the West is an inclusive term for scientists, philosophers, poets, and artists. The scientists who had thought faith and science were mutually exclusive were startled to find that the Hindu religion has science behind it. The translations of Hindu texts like Bhagavad Gita by Wilkins of Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784 and Upanishads by Max Mueller in 1879 created a wave of enthusiasm among the scientists and writers of the age and many started learning Sanskrit to read the texts in original. Danish scientist Niels Bohr said, 'I go into the Upanishads to ask questions' (Prothero 144). He also found inspiration in Chinese philosophy. Schrodinger, Werner Heisenberg, and Tesla were impressed by Vedantic concepts. Carl Sagan (215) said about Hinduism. 'It is the only religion in which time scales correspond to those of modern scientific cosmology.' Some of the scientists had direct interaction with Hindu saints and philosophers. Heisenberg met Tagore in 1929, Tesla met Swami Vivekananda in 1896 and Einstein met Tagore at least four times in Europe.

Tagore also fascinated poets like W.B. Yeats who included the translation of Gitanjali in the anthology of The Oxford Book of Modern Verses. Emerson, T. S. Eliot, Charles Morgan, Aldous Huxley, Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, Christopher Isherwood, Mayers, and Somerset Maugham were also drawn towards India. This paper discusses how Eliot and Oppenheimer, the father of the atomic bomb, found meaning, purpose, and solutions to the modern-day strife in the voice of the East.

T. S. Eliot

Eliot was the pioneer who penetrated into the mines of mystical notions of India and presented them in his extraordinary poem *The Waste Land* (Das 96). A heap of broken

images dominates the poem symbolizing, social disorder, ecological degradation, ethical collapse, and spiritual desolation. The poet has woven a cosmopolitan fabric portraying wasteland with allusions to various cultures, myths, and faiths like the Bible, the Book of Prayer, the Upanishad, and Buddha's Fire Sermon. The poem is scattered with phrases from languages such as German, French, Latin, Greek, and Sanskrit. The poem also incorporates different geographical locales.

This paper deals only with Vedic and Upanishadic references in the poem along with the references to Buddha. At Harvard, Eliot was drawn to great scholars like Josiah Royce, George Santayana, Irving Babbitt, Charles Rockwell Lanman, and James Haughton Woods. Captivated by Indian philosophy and scriptures, Eliot started learning Sanskrit and Pali in 1911. Both Hinduism and Buddhism left an indelible impression on him and his works.

Buddhist reference can be found in the third section of *The Waste Land* which is titled The Fire Sermon invoking the famous sermon of Buddha who said:

‘All things are on fire / They are on fire of infatuation; with birth, old age, death, sorrow lamentation, misery, grief and despair’ (Warren 352)

The burning passion born out of desire is the root cause of all misery according to Buddhism. The only way to extinguish the fire is to stop feeding desire and desisting from sensual pleasures. There is another fire in Hinduism, the fire of tapas which burns away lust and greed, thus purifying the soul which then enjoys pure bliss. The dual nature of fire – burning and purifying resulting in pain and bliss respectively – is indicated by Eliot in this poem. The reference to the Fire Sermon has been taken from *Adittapriyay Sutta*. Similarly, there are verses in the Dhammapada that say that the wasteland should be irrigated well with the waters of compassion and richly manured by meditation for seeds to grow (Narasimhaiah 97-98).

The Upanishad character *Drasta* is replaced by Tiresius, the protagonist of the poem. Both bear a lot of similarities in form and purpose. Tiresius is blind, bisexual, and prophetic and he perceives the entire panorama of desolation in a spatial setting; whereas *Drasta* in Upanishads sees everything in a spiritual setting.

Though the poem *The Waste Land* is a heap of broken images, Eliot ends the poem optimistically as he knows where the solution lies. The physical sterility can be

countered effectively only by spiritual awakening. The image of water and the sound of thunder bring hope to the dry land and barren hearts. The voice in Upanishad reverberates with the sound of thunder. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* is alluded to in the last section of the poem. As the thunder roars Brahma Prajapati's voice is heard. According to *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* Brahma said DA to his three distinguished types of progeny – *devas* or celestial beings, *manushyas* or human beings, and *asuras* or demons – when they sought advice from him. All three interpreted DA as necessary for them as they knew the flaws in their nature. *Devas* are seekers of pleasure, hence they interpreted DA as *Damyata* (restrain). Human beings are miserly in nature, hence they interpreted DA as *Datta* (give). *Asuras* are cruel in nature, hence they interpreted DA as *Dayadhvam* (sympathise). The three types of progeny do not refer to three different creations but as people possessing three *gunas* or characteristic features. Hinduism is both macrocosmic and microcosmic. *Devas*, *Manushyas*, and *asuras* don't live in different planes or worlds. Human beings can be *devas*, *manushyas*, or *asuras* depending on which characteristic feature dominates their nature. Hence the three pieces of advice are common to the entire mankind. 'Sympathy' is the first feature. When one realizes that all are the children of one God, one sympathizes with others; one does not want to harm others. 'Give' is the acquired feature born out of sympathy. When one sympathizes with others, one wants to mitigate their suffering by giving whatever one has. In order to acquire this feature, restraint needs to be cultivated. Unless one restrains oneself either physically or financially one cannot give others. Again 'giving' is not charity done patronizingly. It ought to be a spontaneous gesture of reaching out to one's brethren; in other words, it is mankind's prime duty. According to the *Bhagavad Gita*, doing one's duty without an eye on reward is called *karma yoga* by Lord Krishna. Once mankind achieves this state, the voyage on the ocean of life will be smooth and happy. The thunder in the poem forebodes rain drenching the dry land, quenching the thirst, and reviving nature as well as mankind.

According to Eliot, these three cardinal virtues of restraining, giving, and compassion are essential to escape the apocalyptic vision presented earlier in the poem. Finally, the poem ends with the word *Shantih* repeated thrice. *Shantih* means peace and the word is purposefully repeated thrice to give a sense of invocation. Though there are direct references to the Upanishads in *The Waste Land*, the virtues mentioned in the poem are universal and can be found in all religions and philosophies.

J. Robert Oppenheimer

Oppenheimer is hailed as the father of atomic bomb. He was extremely intelligent and could learn difficult languages like Sanskrit and Dutch in a few months. He could assimilate all theories and was fascinated by quantum physics when he was in Europe. He was revered in America and when the Manhattan Project was initiated Oppenheimer was chosen to lead the team of thousands of people including the best physicists, engineers, and army personnel in view of his intelligence, leadership ability among equals and superiors, subject expertise, personal knowledge of the German scientists involved in the creation of Nazi bomb and hard work.

Oppenheimer in his early years was associated with Felix Adler's Society for Ethical Culture which focused on human welfare as its basic tenet; not transcendental aspects of religion. As a young man in the 1920's Oppenheimer was conspicuously ambitious (Figueira 19) with a sense of the social burden of doing something that would be beneficent to the world; however it threw an immobilizing burden on Oppenheimer (Bird and Sherwin 101).

Then Oppenheimer began to study Sanskrit with Arthur W. Ryder at Berkeley and found it marvelous (Smith and Weiner 165). He started attending Ryder's Thursday evening readings of the Gita and the ethics of the Gita prepared him for his future endeavours that shaped the destiny of the entire mankind. The verses on *Karma Yoga* also called the path of selfless service in Chapter 3 of the Bhagavad Gita offered an acceptable notion of action to the troubled mind of Oppenheimer involved in the making of the atomic bomb.

Verse 1: Arjuna said: If Thou thinkest that knowledge is superior to action, why then, O Kesava, doest Thou ask me to engage in this terrible action (war)?

Verse 4: (Lord said) Man does not reach actionlessness by not performing actions; nor does he attain perfection by mere renunciation.

Verse 7: But whoever, controlling the senses by the mind, O Arjuna, engages himself in Karma Yoga with organs of action, without attachment, he excels. (Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3)

Gita's notion of action with detachment and renunciation of the fruits of action served as a viable alternative to Adler's insistence on constant self-analysis and self-evaluation (Figueira 21). It also brought an element of spiritualism in Oppenheimer's life replacing secularism taught in childhood. He realizes that a *Karma yogi* is a stoic but without a tragic sense of life. The words of the Lord in the Gita gave him equilibrium in thought and emotions. It added a spiritual dimension to the notion of duty towards the motherland. Above all the ideas suited his sense of self-exceptionalism and rejected the burden of personal responsibility of making a bomb of mass destruction.

The teachings of Gita guided him in managing the lab at Los Alamos and agreeing to the use of the bomb for military purposes. In one of the speeches to the Association of Los Alamos scientists, he said that it was their duty as scientists to build the bomb (Smith and Weiner 317). When Szilard wanted him to submit a petition requesting not to drop the bomb over a city, he refused to do so and told his fellow physicist Edward Teller, 'Our fate was in the hands of the best, the most conscientious men of our nation, and they had information which we did not possess' (Brown 13-14). He later said, 'I did my job which was the job I was supposed to do. I was not in a policymaking position at Los Alamos' (USAEC 236).

It would be a great injustice to Oppenheimer to say that he used the principle of *karma yoga* to do what he wanted to do without feelings of guilt or self-criticism. He imbibed the essence of Gita and understood what the Lord said that he was the creator as well as destroyer, the mighty Time.

The Supreme Lord said: I am mighty Time, the source of destruction that comes forth to annihilate the worlds. Even without your participation, the warriors arrayed in the opposing army shall cease to exist. (Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 11, Verse 32)

Oppenheimer was not unaware of the consequences of the use of the atomic bomb. In an NBC 1965 documentary, 'The Decision to Drop the Bomb,' (Banco 143) he recounts his memory of moments after the blast:

We knew the world would not be the same... I remember the line from the Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad Gita: 'Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds.'

He understood he was only a tool in the grand design of destiny and he was pleased that he did his duty perfectly. That is why he could also accept his status after losing

his security clearance without any complaints as he knew his limited role in the grand cosmic design.

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Shantih shantih shantih : T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and South Asian Perceptions

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Abstract

One of the most important literary figures of the twentieth century, T. S. Eliot, lived in a time marked by not just two terrible and dreadful world wars but also by fast mechanization, industrialization, urbanization, and, certainly, mass consumerism. Eliot was a dedicated student of philosophy who showed a particularly keen interest in the Eastern belief system. This study will attempt to examine T. S. Eliot's epoch-making poem 'The Waste Land' and its connection with South Asian culture and ideology. In order to understand the crises of post-war modern European civilization, reflected in the poem as spiritual decline, treachery, deception, and skepticism, Eliot drew upon certain sources that could counter the wisdom of the West. Eliot along with his poetic vision as well as sensibility manifests in the Bhagwad Gita, Upanishads, Vedas, Patanjali's Sutras, Buddhism, and so forth. East, for Eliot, is a glimmer of hope for a world afflicted by its own spiritual problems. The influence of South Asian perception can be identified throughout the poem. The paper will attempt to foreground that the cultural integration of the East and the West has been addressed in a secular spirit rather than being in conflict.

Keywords

World wars, Philosophy, Aesthetics, Spiritual problems, Cultural integration

Introduction

Religion, philosophy, and poetry are undoubtedly quite different from one another in conception and may have different goals, yet in actuality they often intersect. For instance, poetry may express strong emotions in a singular way while also having undertones of both religion and philosophy. Additionally, poetry, religion, and philosophy all arise from their strong and in-depth levels with specific powerful sensations that develop into intricate visions with cosmic importance. Therefore, by using the sharp senses that underlie T. S. Eliot's poetry, we may go further into the works of a philosophical poet. We may see how profoundly the deep-rooted philosophies influenced Eliot's worldview and learn more about his grasp of the human condition by examining these findings with those of the Upanishads.

Thomas Sterns Eliot (26 September 1888- 4 January 1965), a central figure in English language modernist poetry, is one of the many thinkers in the Western world who has been drawn towards the traditional and old wisdom of South Asian philosophy. One of the key figures of the twentieth century, Eliot lived in a period etched by not just two horrible and devastating world wars but also by technological advancements, industrial developments, growing urbanizations, and undoubtedly, mass consumption. The study examines the deterioration of modern-day civilization and several other facets, encompassing lifestyle, thinking, and religion, as well as every part of existence. It aims to demonstrate how human beings have been ethically and spiritually damaged by following meaningless practices, material gain, desire, dominance, and temptation. In reality, the poem *The Waste Land* provides an account of an insightful and deeply emotional portrait of the spiritual condition of modern man. Through the poem, Eliot focuses on the utter sterility and morbidity of modern times. He reflects on the loss of conscience and wisdom of modern wastelanders, their affectionless relationships, distress, and sexual perversion.

He not only highlights the degenerative aspects of modern civilisation but also finds the path to salvation through his deep knowledge of philosophy and spirituality.

It is now well acknowledged that T. S. Eliot drew inspiration from Indian philosophy for both his poetry and drama. It is significant to explore how Eliot uses Indian philosophy explicitly in both his poetry and drama. In *The Waste Land*, the third section, titled 'The

Fire Sermon’, Eliot explicitly refers to the Buddha’s Fire Sermon and purposefully unites St. Augustine and the Buddha as an essence of the poem; he also makes an indication towards the thunder of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad in the poem’s concluding section. Eliot in *Burnt Norton* makes a pointed reference to the lotus, a representation of the supreme reality in Hinduism as well as in Buddhism. In the third poem of *The Dry Salvages*, he evokes Krishna’s lessons; at the climax of *The Cocktail Party*, he further encompasses a seemingly exact transcription of a passage from the Gita (Chapter 8, verse 5); and in Act II of *The Dry Salvages*, he retells Sir Harcourt-Reilly’s words from the Buddha’s last sermon – ‘Work out your salvation with diligence’. Due to the context in which they appear, such apparent links cannot be viewed just as a facade or disregarded as bizarre; rather, they must be viewed as essential components of supreme entirety. Furthermore, they powerfully imply how Eliot uses South Asian philosophical ideas and symbols in his works.

According to T. S. Eliot, Western civilisation had major drawbacks. He never considered Western philosophy to be the most superior one. Oriental texts, in the past, were regarded as inferior in comparison to the Western text by early scholars. Eliot, however, opposed the binary division between the Occident and the Orient. His understanding of South Asian philosophy, anthropology, and Sanskrit texts indicates that he stood apart from the colonial/imperial conceptions. During his graduation from Harvard, Eliot spent a period of time studying Yoga Sutras with a leading scholar, James Haughton Woods. According to the Sutras, Yoga is the practice of putting an end to ‘the fluctuations of the mind-stuff’ (Patañjali 8) and this offers the potential for optimism and calmness in Eliot’s poem *The Waste Land*.

In addition to being evident in the poem’s form, style, and tone as well as in Eliot’s annotations, Patanjali Yoga Sutra’s classical philosophy serves as the foundation for the poem’s depiction of a devotional path. Even though the poem is about fragmentation and degeneration, it can still make sense.

The diversity of *The Waste Land* may be inferred from a wide range of resources used in its composition, including the usage of six languages, widely recognised songs, and thirty-five authors, and one of the languages employed in it is Sanskrit (Diwedi 32). The Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, and Bhagavad-Gita, and the two main Hindu epics, the

Ramayana and Mahabharata, are all written in Sanskrit, which serves as the foundation of Indian philosophy and culture. The philosophy of Hinduism and Buddhism represents one of the fundamental sources among the other influences that helped in the creation of the masterpiece. As we all know *The Waste Land* is divided into five respected sections – ‘The Burial of the Dead’, ‘A Game of Chess’, ‘The Fire Sermon’, ‘Death by Water’, and ‘What the Thunder Said’. The two from these five sections have a direct connection with the doctrines of Lord Buddha, which is the philosophy of Buddhism, and the principles from the Upanishads, the fundamental component of Hinduism.

The Indian belief in the concept of soul transmigration is illustrated in the opening section of the poem, ‘The Burial of the Dead’. Rebirth occurs after death. Though the title is taken from *The Book of Common Prayer*, it refers to the burial of the fertility gods alluded to by Weston and Frazer (Thomas 238). The first section’s title alludes to what is known as ‘Dhavani’ in Indian aesthetics. Two different types of death—one physical and the other spiritual—are what the poet seeks to present. Even while a person is living, spiritual death can still happen. The poem’s apparent purpose is to teach the unknown. The poem starts with the letter ‘A’, the initial letter of the English alphabet. The poem’s first letter is crucial to one’s life lesson as well. However, the people who stay in the ‘wasteland’ do not recognise the sacredness of this letter. The poem *The Waste Land* starts with the following lines:

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers. (Lines 220-221)

Easter which generally falls in the month of April commemorates Jesus Christ’s resurrection. Even in the myths of vegetation myths, spring drew potency to the Fisher King as well as fertility in his land. In the poem, April is known to be the cruellest month because the resurrection and the stirring of life are determined by fear and anxiety. It is ironic that ‘winter kept us warm’. Also, Lilacs, which are a symbol of fertility as per

primitive myth, are brought in an ironical sense to point out that in the modern world, ruined due to wars and consumerism, bloom 'out of the dead land'. Eliot uses the subtle imagistic objective-correlative of deadly winter and regenerating spring with its drop of water, only to indicate the spiritual void that can be transformed by the understanding of Oriental scriptures as well as Buddhist philosophy. The philosophy suggests that human being ought to seek his salvation or 'Nirvana' by atoning for the sins he has committed in his lifetime.

In his notes, Eliot stated that the title has been derived from Miss Jessie Weston's treatise *From Ritual to Romance* where she depicts the cults of vegetation and fertility as well as the importance of the Grail Legend to bring back life to the barren land by the atonement of the sins of Oedipus of Thebes, subsequently recognized as Fisher King in the last section of the poem wherein a quest for the Holy Grail is to be executed. The desolate land of spiritual disorder where human beings are living will become a land of vegetation and fertility when water is sprinkled on it. Therefore, the wastelanders should begin their search for the spiritual droplets of water that symbolises the belief in the presence of the almighty God. This perception of Eliot suggests that he made a wise choice in using the title of his poem to contradict Western/modern epistemology to foreground a remedy for the issue of spiritual barrenness. The poem's title might be linked to a significant Buddhist scripture, *Dharmapada* wherein Goutam Buddha advises people to cultivate Bodhi Trees in their souls by being spiritually conscious of themselves –

In any case, we should find it illuminating to read a Thai Buddhist monk's translation of Dhammapada under the title 'Growing the Bodhi Tree in the Garden of the Heart ...'. The question now is how to grow the seeds of this tree in the heart of every one of us – which is analogous to the re-enactment of crucifixion in the life of every Christian. The land is wasted and the seeds have no chance to grow without the water. There are verses in the Dhammapada that say they should be irrigated well with the waters of compassion and richly manured by meditation. (Narasimhaiah 97-98)

This implies that realising oneself and learning about the Supreme power are achieved via meditation and atonement. So, human beings ought to strive for his redemption by seeking enlightenment.

In the second section of 'A Game of Chess', Eliot illustrates the terrible situation that modern humanity finds itself in because it lacks even the most fundamental understanding of profound values. They have become so engaged in animistic principles that they have lost sight of their humanity. A crucial component of life is sexuality as 'man's fate originates in sex', yet now, rather than emerging as an approach for reproduction, it has become an object of intrigue. The most sacred institution, marriage, has been degraded to the same stage as drug addiction as well as has become a pure excuse to indulge in sensual and carnal pleasures without any regard for obligations to one's family. They see existence as nothing more than 'a game of chess' on this planet. Family life and marital life function mechanically. Surekha Dangwal in *Hinduism in T. S. Eliot's Writing*, regarding this topic, states, 'The man is not ready to bear responsibility, and woman, not ready to bear children. If the attitude, like the waste-landers, keeps on growing, the world is supposed to come to a standstill some day' (20-21). In the poem the episode between Albert and Lil highlights the emptiness of marital relationships –

I can't help it, she said, pulling a long face,
It's the pills I took, to bring it off, she said.
(She's had five already, and nearly died of young George.)
The chemist said it would be all right, but I've never been the same.
You are a proper fool, I said.
Well, if Albert won't leave you alone, there it is, I said,
What you get married for if you don't want children? (Line 226)

These lines allude to the careless desire as well as an absence of pure attachment and obligations in marriage. However, if interpreted with an Indian perspective, these statements particularly the final line, offer a resolution to the issue. Marriage, in India, is seen as a ritual or 'sanskara', a connection of affection, respect, and commitment between two individuals, and parenting is also regarded as 'sanskara'. Lil, the lady, has broken the marriage's sacredness and interfered with reproduction itself after using medications. Eliot in his work indicates that sex is essential to a person's existence and that, for birth control, people ought to follow 'sanyam'.

The third section of the poem 'The Fire Sermon' takes its name from the Fire Sermon that Gautam Buddha delivered to persuade his Buddhist disciples from the destructive and

harmful effects that the fires of lust, temptation, obsession, and hate had on the human soul. While Buddhism as a religion originated in India, King Ashoka, the Mauryan king of the third century BC, was instrumental in its expansion to Sri Lanka, Burma, Malayasia, Tibet, Thailand, China, and Indonesia in South Asia. In these nations, the teachings of the Buddha are still remembered, revered, and practiced. This perception of man's existence is foregrounded by Saint Augustine, a true ascetic of Christianity. He acknowledges that when he was younger, he struggled to resist the temptation of physical impulses. Buddha preaches – 'All things are on fire / They are on fire of infatuation; with birth, old age, death, sorrow lamentation, misery, grief, and despair' (Warren 352). Therefore, in order to develop an aversion to these emotions and practices, the life of 'asceticism', a path of redemption should be practiced. This is required to liberate themselves from the never-ending misery of passion and temptation. It is worth citing Dr. Surekha Dangwal's statement in this regard: 'Desire is the root cause of man's sufferings, and the moment he gets rid of it, he attains perfect 'Nirvana'... [and] the attainment of 'Nirvana,' as preached by the Lord, is the self-denial, which implies the rejection of all senses' (33). Together Gautam Buddha and St. Augustine's references indicate that the knowledge of East and West coexists to illustrate the route of redemption or 'Nirvana'. Hindu texts claim that there is a higher fire called 'Tapa' that exists and that it consumes the fires of desire while the human soul experiences the ecstasy of cleansing known as 'Anand'.

In *The Waste Land* 'Death by Water' is a revised version of the last section of a French poem called 'Dans le Restaurant' written by Eliot. This part of the poem indicates the relation of water with mortality and the state of death by drowning. It has a connection with the drowned god of fertility cults, a reference to the shipwreck in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The Bengali community of India follows the same ritual on the final day of the Durga Pooja Festival wherein they immerse the decorative idol of goddess Durga in the water. In Maharashtra, the same practice is seen on Ganesh Chaturthi.

Eliot conceived that the final part of the poem titled 'What the Thunder Said' was not only the finest section but also this particular part justified the whole poem. In the *Upanishads* the message of the thunder, as referred to in the poem is metaphorical, deciphering Prazapati's teaching style to his three different types of disciples – gods, mankind, and demons. The three disciples approach the father preceptor and explain

what they have learned during the time allotted for study. After completing their reading, the three disciplines approach the father's preceptor and question him about the virtues they ought to bring in themselves to have a meaningful existence. Prajapati says the syllable 'da' three times, with different meanings for each of them; for gods 'da' means Damyata (Control yourself), for men Datta (Give in); for Demons, it signifies Dayadhavam (be compassionate). The poem finally ends on an optimistic note with the triple use of the words 'Shantih shantih shantih', foregrounding peace and tranquility in this meaningless world.

We live in a world where atomic power is considered to be supreme and fear has become constant. Eliot understood the fact that peace, instead of war and hatred, is much needed in this situation. The poem was composed against the backdrop of the atrocities of World War. This kind of thought is even put out by academics such as F.R. Leavis, '... the poem ends where it began' (Leavis 103). A state of order and stability was desperately required to set the entire humanity on a secure path. The last words of the poem refer to the first section of the poem that depicts the curse of 'dead land' – 'Shantih' provides the only calmness and hope, according to the poet, to escape from the 'cruellest' spatiotemporal existence. Manju Jain depicts, 'Eliot's use of 'Shantih' implies that he had to look beyond the European tradition to find a word of adequate depth and resonance' (194). The last line, which bestows tranquility and order, functions as the beacon light of the East to the entire human existence. Eliot's understanding of the South Asian philosophy and its implication through his masterpiece serves as a panacea for every ailment plaguing the modern world. Eliot's ability to discern and evoke the timeless and universal reality of mankind, beyond the artificial divisions between the East and the West, is actually what gives his work an eternal elegance and a profound power. The poem's universal overview indicates to a greater vision and hope.

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The “blossoming of lilac-bush”: A Study of the Post-War Reception of *The Waste Land*

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Abstract

T. S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land' has developed a contemporaneity by effectively transcending the Modernist context within which it is born. The poem exhibits certain features that have stayed relevant for the later generations of poets and readers even after much of the Modernist intentions have ceased to exist. In our presentation, we will identify those features by providing a brief analysis of the responses to the poem from multiple poets, mostly those after World War I. The principal observation resulting from the readings would be that the poem contains a restorative promise which proved commensurable with the democratizing tendency characterizing much of the post-war era at a time when a critical attitude towards Modernism was developing among the Late-Modernist and Postmodern poets. While not denying the essentially Modernist nature of 'The Waste Land', this paper will show how almost all the conflicting receptions of the poem have converged upon the vision of revitalization.

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Keywords

Modernism, Rejuvenation, Eliotism, Post-war reception

Introduction

Undoubtedly the most influential long poem in the English language in the twentieth century, *The Waste Land* (1922) by T. S. Eliot strikes us as still quite a recent work despite the centenary we are having right now. Written during the devastating inner-war period,

the poem speaks of a time fret with political, cultural, psychological, and intellectual tensions. One of the evident signs of this influential nature is the proliferation of long poems in the twentieth century, poems that have similarly attempted to capture the present world and its desolation. It is not as if long poems were absent in the history of English literature before *The Waste Land*. However, the importance of the genre of the non-narrative long poem as the vehicle of any particular poet's representative voice has increased considerably. Poetic works belonging to the different schools of poetry that emerged after 1945 have often been such long poems, be it *Howl* by Allen Ginsberg, the Beat poet, *Of Being Numerous* by the Objectivist poet George Oppen, or *My Life* by the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poet Lyn Hejinian, *Paterson* by William Carlos Williams, *The Whitsun Weddings* by Philip Larkin, *Gunslinger* by Ed Dorn, and *Station Island* by Seamus Heaney are some of the other important poems of the century that bear traces of Eliot's work.

Objectives

Given the multitude of responses that T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* has generated in the year 1922, it would be impossible to bring every one of them together in one paper-length study. So, instead, this paper intends to arrive at certain observations that can sum up those responses. The objective of this paper is to provide a study of the reception of this key text from modernist literature to show not only the evolution in the reception of Eliot over the years but also the changing idea of Modernism as such. As we move into Late-Modernism and Postmodernism, the diversification in the reception of *The Waste Land* becomes very symbolic of the evolution of Western aesthetics in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Literature Review

While *The Waste Land* received much appreciation from Eliot's Modernist contemporaries, a considerable number of readers were instead shocked by the apparent lack of coherence of the poem. 'Waste Paper – A Poem of Profound Insignificance' by H.P. Lovecraft, written in 1923, is representative of those who found the poem too meaningless to be taken seriously. The epigraph for Lovecraft's poem reads 'All is laughter, all is dust, all is nothing, / for all that is cometh from unreason' (Lovecraft). While Lovecraft's poem is a parody, *Paterson* by William Carlos Williams is one of the most profound poetic responses that *The Waste Land* elicited from a Modernist

contemporary. Williams' poetics has indeed emerged as a more tonally American alternative to the form of Modernism represented by Eliot and Pound. The competition between the two poets becomes apparent when Williams recalls the publication of *The Waste Land* as 'the great catastrophe to our letters' (Williams 1948, 146). Williams says that not only did *The Waste Land* come to dominate the form of Modernism, but it quite disturbingly made the genre of poetry a property almost exclusively for the academic world. So, the Late-Modernist poets like George Oppen sought 'unaudenized and diselioted' (Oppen 1990, 31) poetry to rescue poetry from its intellectualization by Eliotesque modernity.

Methodology

By the aim of the paper, the primary methodology applied in this paper is that of close reading. This paper does not engage in a survey of the critical works that have been written on *The Waste Land* over the years since the intention is not to look at the evolution of critical opinions. Rather, it wants to exclusively see how Eliot's work has influenced other poets. The best assessment of that would be possible upon overserving exactly how we can find resonances of *The Waste Land* in other poets' themes and choice of imagery. Only a close reading can locate the spectral presence of Eliot in the diction and theme of other poets. The paper also applies a comparative reading of the poetic works and professions of aesthetic theory issued from particular poets. Thus, while the close reading is not supposed to be exhaustive, it is meant to be intensive, so that certain key underlying tendencies can come up to the surface.

Analysis

The close readings, thus engaged, tell us that the truly relevant aspect of *The Waste Land* is not its apparent senselessness or its elitist erudite. Rather, the real gift of the poem is a rejuvenating strength that lies somewhere deep within the wasteland. While Yeats's honey bees 'build in the crevices / Of loosening masonry' (The Stare's Nest By My Window. Yeats 208) or Marianne Moore populates her 'imaginary gardens with real toads' (*Poetry* Moore 267), Eliot's poem ends with the sound of thunder and the promise of rain (Eliot 18). Certain works like Heaney's *Station Island* or John Riley's *Czargrad* resonate with Eliot's project of spiritual restoration. Hence, Riley's poem begins with the mention of the 'blossoming / of lilac-bush' (Riley 605), a phrase that serves as the title of this paper, and reminds us of the lilacs that are present at the

beginning of *The Waste Land*. Unlike Riley, Heaney, or Eliot, other poets envision this project in more secular terms. The diversity of the visions rising out of Eliot's wasteland outweighs the ideological or religious affiliations of the original poet. Hejinian identifies that the senselessness that Eliot projects is not meant to be discouraging. What one encounters is actually 'the infinite potential for meaningfulness' as presented through a language that is 'not-yet-sense' (Hejinian 2000, 164).

One remarkable proof of Eliot's malleable influence can be found in Philip Larkin's 'The Whitsun Weddings'. Given that Larkin's professed stance was anti-modernist, it is unexpected that the poem can concur with Eliot's vision. But the critic John Osborne notes that in many ways 'The Whitsun Weddings' mirrors *The Waste Land*, be it the description of major rivers being polluted by industrial waste, or the reference to London and its blackened walls (Osborne 129). Most importantly, both poems open with the atmosphere of heat and drought and end with the promise of rejuvenating rain (129).

Discussion

Lytard regards postmodernism as characterized by an incredulity towards metanarratives. Eliot's profession of faith in theological agency, particularly the Christian divinity, does not coalesce with the attitude of postmodernism. Thus, Oppen's call for a 'de-elioted' (Oppen 1990, 31) poetry is symbolic of an era that has come to regard metanarratives with incredulity. Instead, Oppen's *Of Being Numerous* would speak of the plurality of being and therefore the culture of micro-narratives. The lasting include of *The Waste Land* tells us that while the later generations may not always share in Eliot's belief, the longing for some redemptive presence as expressed by Eliot is still a compelling idea for the later generations. Not every poet has shared Eliot's spiritual belief. However, the diagnosis of the human condition as available in the poem has been its most compelling resource.

The current paper has limited itself to the reception of *The Waste Land* as found in the works of poets from England and the United States. Further research in this direction can be undertaken by studying the influence of Eliot's poem on poets from other nations of the world. In particular, the Kallol group of poets in Bengal incorporated the Modernist aesthetics of Eliot, and many European poets have similarly found interesting aspects to the poem. The study can further be extended by categorizing the responses according to the gender, class, and nationality of the poets. In particular, the responses from women

poets like Sylvia Plath or Elizabeth Bishop would merit a separate study. Further, from just *The Waste Land*, we can extend the survey to the reception of the other works of Eliot, such as poems like ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’, ‘Hollow Men’ and *Four Quartets* and plays like *Murder in the Cathedral* and *The Elder Statesman*.

Conclusion

The intention of the paper is to demonstrate how poets often develop their voices by engaging with other poets. A poem is very often in dialogue with other poems, and this exchange can be understood when attention is paid to the imagery and form of the poem. As the line from *Czargrad* which has served as the title of this paper illustrates, poets can take a cue from specific lines or words used by other poets, and an awareness of the general poetic tradition can let us know how this dialogue is being extended via multiple poems. This process of dialogue keeps multiple works alive in other works, and Eliot himself has been one of the biggest proponents of this practice, as intertextuality is a key feature of his poetic composition.

With time, we can see a rarefication of the original work, as the particularities of the ideological position of the poet become less relevant. As authorial intention thus recedes in the background, aspects that are universal in the work come to the surface. The same process also ensures that works that are void of any universal feature will pass into oblivion. Examples like that of Larkin and Hejinein show that the universality of the poem *The Waste Land* lies in the fact that it can speak to so many people across time and space, and serve as an indelible model for poets seeking to capture the spirit of an age. So, time has attested to *The Waste Land*’s claim to be a masterpiece of English literature. Now, in the post-covid world, Eliot’s images are as relatable and poignant as ever.

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From War to Contagion: An Exploration of the Philosophical Relevance of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* during the Times of Pandemic

G Kavitha

Abstract

With death sprouting like fungi and its fear spreading like the mycelium, the contemporary pandemic times mirror the pathetic state of the inhabitants of a bizarre post-war and postmodern realm called 'The Waste Land.' This paper attempts to unveil the existential challenges of humanity to grapple with the ambiance of death's omnipresence during the Coronavirus catastrophe, concerning T. S. Eliot's magnum opus, 'The Waste Land.' It highlights the portrayal of the dead and the living as 'the walking dead' and relates to the pandemic's nature of overflowing graveyards that blur the boundaries between life and death. It also provides a philosophical inquiry into today's human reality that is replete with spiritual hollowness and absolute hopelessness and ensures to remind the forgotten masses of the true essence of human existence- true for all times ranging from war to contagion.

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Keywords

Contagion, Covid-19, Existential, Pandemic, Philosophical

Introduction

Renowned as the magnificent magnum opus of T. S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land' is simply a chaotic jumble of different voices put together at its first reading. Interestingly, the poem's original title was 'He Do the Police in Different Voices,' a Dickensian line from the novel 'Our Mutual Friend'. The fragmented yet finely threaded rhetorics of these

Different Voices create a façade of the journey that takes the man to the same destination from which he has headed. The journey that is 433 lines long begins and ends with the same yearning quest of man to know the truth of life and death. Irrespective of the title, the poem echoes several implications and themes relevant universally in humankind dwelling in the ‘wasteland,’ a generic abode of humans devoid of any humanity, home of the ‘Hollow men,’ as Eliot aptly coined.

The poem was written in the aftermath of World War I and is most popularly perceived as a reflection of the disillusionment, despair, cultural and spiritual fragmentation, and the consequent existential quest that characterized the zeitgeist of the war era. However, its relevance is ever more in our contemporary times post-pandemic, where man’s existence has become unbearable and daunting to his kind and self. ‘The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the suicidal behavior’ (Pathirathna 2022). The suicidal rates during this recent global pandemic have been spiking up so steeply that contemporary men more often sound like the Sybil of Cumae wanting death:

[...] when the boys said, ‘Sybil, what do you want?’

She replied ‘I want to die.’ (Eliot: Epigraph *The Waste Land*)

Not to misunderstand, it should be noted that it is not Sybil’s voice of the wisdom echoing in their throats that is suggested in the noted semblance above, but the wasteland dwellers’ weak voice of disability to comprehend and face the truth of life which dauntingly manifests in the dark form of death. It is more severe during war or contagion due to the overwhelming omnipresence of death that blurs the boundaries between the living and the dead.

The poem is woven with an ambitious desire to deduce and decipher mankind’s most fundamental question of existence. Using different voices, multiple languages, varied cultures, religions, and innumerable literary references, Eliot endeavors to find some fathomable framework to comprehend and escape the phenomenon of death and the dread it causes. Like a mirror for all of us living through the horrors of the pandemic, this masterpiece of Eliot provides a spiritual consolation as we indulge in the incredible chaos of its countless layers and allusions, best illustrating the nature of human life.

Objectives

The paper highlights significant themes from various parts of the poem and provides contemporary pandemic reinterpretation and relevance in its context. Following the poem's sequence, it begins with the 'myth of rebirth' elicited from part I and provides a naturalistic and eco-centric pandemic reinterpretation. It then includes larger themes of Isolation, its complicated and deadly nuances as experienced by the people during the pandemic, Spiritual Hollowness, and the Wheel of Question.

Literature Review

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Eliot's 'The Waste Land' has caught much attention as many people felt related to some of the turbulence and the afflictions of those hollow human beings as described by T. S. Eliot in his work. Various scholarly works addressing the same idea have come up. Suresh Pattali's "Revisiting 'The Waste Land' by T. S. Eliot in the times of Covid", Shirsak Ghosh's "The Re-Appearance of T. S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land' in the times of the Covid-19 Pandemic" are a few. These works have primarily attempted to connect some of the poem's lines and themes with the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper draws inspiration from these latest studies and aspires to provide a novel pandemic narrative to certain parts of the poem.

Analysis

The Mass Burial of the Dead

Eliot reserves the poem's first part to describe the human world's fundamental issue and titles it 'The Burial of the Dead.' It is primarily about the metaphysical question of how to cope with death and the phenomenon of the burial of the dead, particularly during the age and in a place in which there are no possible myths of rebirth. The importance of the myth of rebirth is needless to mention for humankind to find meaning and sustain all the existential crises of life and the daunting fear of death. Be it war or a contagion, the problem escalates as it is not merely about the burial of the dead but the mass burial of the dead. It becomes incredibly challenging to find a way of coping with this catastrophe. The sight of mass burial itself is an uncanny experience that our memory would not lose its hold anytime soon in one's lifetime. It is a shock to the consciousness and the conscience within every breathing man to see the heap of bodies buried or burnt together. Eliot borrows Dante's astonishment to express his sight of finding people

crowding in swarms like worms into the ledges of hell:

Unreal City,

[...] I had not thought death had undone so many. (Line 63)

The poem eventually unfolds the bizarre myths of rebirth that Eliot crazily constructs to find some meaning for life. Among them, there is a naturalistic and eco-centric one, holding substantial relevance to not merely our times but for all to come. It is suggested in the lines:

That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year? (Line 72)

During the pandemic, it is observed that nature has flourished to its fullest due to the lack of human intervention. But, the above verse suggests otherwise that it is, in a way, the human intervention through the mass burial that potentially supplied abundant nutrients for nature to flourish exponentially in the wild. Thereby substantiating one of Eliot's myths of rebirth, considering its naturalistic and eco-centric form of manifestation, hinting at the practice of 'Natural Burial', which emerged in the UK around 1993 as a form of symbolic and environmental regeneration. (Clayden 2015).

The phenomenon of the mass burial, heaps of carcasses fed to the earth at once, results in the blossoming of woods. This is the return of the dead in some fashion. Although it is not quite satisfactory, it will have to do as there is no real metanarrative of the resurrection of the dead possible in the wasteland- of war and pandemic.

Besides this naturalistic point of view, the burial of the dead is a theme so massively dreadful. The fear of death has always haunted mankind since eternity. The traumatic impact of the mass burial of the dead during the war over, Eliot is evident in the poem as the figure of the dead is prominent and frequent throughout the poem. It substitutes for any kind of love interest in the poem, suggesting an image of a skeleton replacing a fleshy, desirous lover:

But at my back in a cold blast, I hear
The rattles of bones and chuckle spread ear to ear. (Lines 185-186)

Also, the line '[...] white bodies naked on the low damp ground' brings back the motif of the burial of the dead, mainly referring to the massive slaughter of people during World War I. It echoes the horrendous situation during the pandemic, except with a

change in the death machine from war to contagion. This leads to the motif of isolation as an incurable suffering in mankind, a prominent theme in the poem.

Motif of Isolation

The motif of isolation is a direct consequence of the mass burial of the dead or the mass death in general. Whether war or a pandemic, it works alike, giving rise to the most painful suffering of isolation. Eliot highlights this theme in various parts of the poem. In part I, it appears as 'Fog' (Eliot 208), in which the embodiment of Holloman, Eliot's Prufrock, stares by the window instead of attending people at the party. This is the isolation of one sort, where one feels lonely even amidst people. Another situation where it is prominent is in the lines:

Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet. (Line 65)

It expresses the experience of people being crowded together in the great metropolises of 20th-century London, but never had they been more isolated from each other spiritually. The isolation of the typist after her lover leaves her alone is another example of the same, where she turns on the gramophone and has music to fill her spiritual void. This suggests the power of art to rescue an individual from isolation.

There are various aspects of isolation during the World War. People in those regions directly affected by the war experienced physical isolation from the outside world due to military blockades. Many people were evacuated from their homes and relocated from their hometowns and communities, leading to a sense of isolation. The war has brought social and emotional isolation for many individuals and families. Soldiers were separated from their loved ones for extended periods, and civilians often had to endure the absence of family members serving in the military. The stress and trauma of living in such isolation certainly had a psychological toll on mankind.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the motif of isolation is very obvious, appearing in different layers. Due to the contagion, the concept of 'lockdown' was implemented, affecting people in various ways. Similar to Dante's ledges of hell, there are different layers of isolation in people's experience. Firstly, isolation from community and society, as lockdown means to lock oneself in one's house. Human species are known as social beings, and restriction in their communion leads to their isolation. Secondly, people

experienced isolation within their own house from their family members, especially spouses. This is due to the deteriorating relationship between the two sexes that Eliot also describes quite elaborately. Contemporary times are notorious for loosening bonds between partners. Divorce rates have spiked during lockdown. The final and most dreadful form of isolation is with self. When people were isolated in quarantine, most patients fell to depression due to the isolation from their selves.

Therefore, it should be noted that the intensity and nature of the isolation that people of wasteland- both war and pandemic, experience is irreparable as it is not merely about the feeling of isolation from outside and others but from within, the very spirit of one's own, due to the spiritual hollowness. This is another motif that Eliot pursues throughout the poem, seeking all the possible cultures, philosophies, and practices, ranging from Western to Eastern.

Search for Truth and Salvation

One of the most prominent voices in the poem is that of Tiresias, the speaker of all philosophic, meditative, and melancholic passages. This voice weaves in and out of other voices, making judgments and, in general, deploring the condition of spiritual decrepitude of the wasteland of post-war and post-pandemic times. Realizing the gravity of spiritual hollowness, which denied man any solace in life, Eliot seeks the sacred Vedas of Hinduism and the contributions of Buddha. He devotes the entire part III, titled 'The Fire Sermon,' which borrows from Buddhism. It is what Buddha preaches to his followers who were searching for the truth of life, like Eliot himself. It suggests Eliot's ardent pursuit of wisdom and enlightenment to resolve the riddle of life.

In his quest to comprehend the root cause of mankind's perennial sufferings, Buddha identified and concluded that the fundamental source of suffering in the world is any form of desire. His final formulation in The Fire Sermon explains that the only way an individual can cope with suffering and find an acceptable life, a sense of peace in one's spirit, is by achieving a state of absolute 'desirelessness.' This is the essence of Buddhist philosophy and worship. Eliot absorbed this notion of Buddhist ethic so profoundly that he began the poem suggesting the daunting effects of desire- particularly sexual desire on its victims of wasteland. Eliot devotes a significant part of the poem to conveying what Buddha had said about how to put off the fire of desire within oneself. The first step is the suppression of the five senses.

Upon learning the harmful power of desire, one conceives an aversion for the five senses and becomes divested of passion, and in its absence, he becomes free; at this point, he also realizes that there is no requirement of rebirth as it is exhausted for him who is no more of this world. Reaching this threshold where one can escape the wheel of rebirth is the fundamental notion that gives purpose to Hindus and Buddhists, engaging them in pursuit of achieving desirelessness and thereby evading from the clutches of worldly pain, suffering, sorrow, passion, and most cruel desire.

Interestingly, even after such an extensive contemplation and consultation of all the possible religions, philosophies, and texts, Eliot, at the end of the poem, resigns himself to the same metaphysical question about the truth of life with which he had begun this endeavor.

This completes his paradoxical journey, whose destination meets with the point of its beginning.

The Wheel of the Quest

The ambition with which Eliot began constructing this poem lasts for 433 lines and completes its full circle at the end, merging in essence with its beginning. Consulting various cultures, practicing different religions, understanding multiple perspectives, and so on, Eliot reached the same question even after his lengthy pursuit for answers to those questions of life that have no answers in real, for it is the wheel of the quest that pushes our being to yearn, to know the unknown. However, a spiritual quest is not a journey meant to reach a destination, for there is no destination as such. It is the journey that makes all the difference. It certainly did to Eliot as he reached the end of his composition, and it very well does to every reader of 'The Waste Land,' which is no less than a meditative pilgrimage around the Wheel of Spiritual Quest.

Discussion

It can be inferred that T. S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land' is a universal poem whose relevance never perishes until the human does. It is a profoundly philosophic composition that attempts all the possibilities to help mankind find a way out of its fundamental crises of existence. It helps all of us belonging to an era that is replete with spiritual degeneration.

Living through the pandemic, most of us suffered multiple deaths in the same families and friend circles witnessed the uncanny sight of mass burial of COVID-19 patients

whose bodies were hardly allowed to even look from a distance before their burial due to the fear of the contagion not of virus alone but death as well. It instilled in many of us some numbness toward life and death. People have lost the will to live, for they find no meaning in mortal existence. In this state, Eliot's 'The Waste Land' offers some meditative and philosophic solace, some realm where our deepest quest to know the truth echoes, if not revealed, the absolute truth of life if there is one at all.

Conclusion

The paper provides a pandemic reinterpretation of Eliot's 'The Waste Land' and proves its relevance in the contemporary post-pandemic realm. It demystifies the 'myth of rebirth' by suggesting a naturalistic and eco-centric paradigm as elucidated in the idea titled the 'The Burial of the Dead.' It establishes the poem as a source of philosophic and meditative experience, which has the potential to mirror man's deepest quest to grapple with the existential crises that the pandemic has revived in the world.

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The Search for Salvation through T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*

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Abstract

T. S. Eliot's poem 'The Waste Land' delves into the theme of self-reflexivity, portraying the lives of individuals alienated and isolated due to World War I. Many suffered from paranoia, leading lives devoid of purpose. The poem paints a vivid picture of the social characteristics of people in London during this period. T. S. Eliot, influenced by Indian philosophy, drew references from Hindu texts, offering a glimmer of hope. It suggests persevering through life with compassion, extending charity, and mastering inner thoughts to attain inner peace. This philosophy is captured in the resonant word 'DA', symbolizing the sound of thunder. It echoes thrice, representing 'Datta' (charity), 'Dayadvata' (compassion towards others), and 'Damyata' (control over inner thoughts). Despite the fragmented psyche of humanity post World War I, Eliot held hope for positive transformations in the years to come, contingent on people's faith in God and the power of prayer.

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Keywords

Self-reflexivity, Spirituality, Biblical characters, Barren land

Introduction

T. S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land', written and published in 1922, had a profound impact upon its release. The poem is segmented into five parts and was dedicated to his fellow poet, Ezra Pound, who assisted in condensing the poem to half its original size. Eliot is celebrated as one of the most influential poets of the 20th century. In this work, he

paints a bleak picture of city dwellers who have become disillusioned, perceiving their environment as barren. From Eliot's perspective, all, including the River Thames, have lost their once-pure essence.

Eliot delves into the anxiety that permeated the modern world at the onset of the twentieth century. He explores the relationship between the common man and the world of his time. Many individuals, having returned from the war, found themselves grappling with their place in a world that had changed drastically. Drafted into battle, many of these soldiers faced combat reluctantly. Despite adversities like rain, they were thrust to the war front, adhering to strict schedules. Their experiences led them to question the very existence of a benevolent deity; as they witnessed the death of comrades, many lost hope and struggled to find meaning in a world forever altered by war.

The hot water at ten.

And if it rains, a closed car at four.

And we shall play a game of chess,

Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door. (Lines 133-136)

In this poem, T. S. Eliot reveals the self-reflexivity of the mind, delving into an inner world riddled with contradictions and paradoxes. The modern world is depicted as one devoid of hope, where inner peace remains elusive. The profound disturbance to personal spiritual beliefs is evident in Eliot's poetry, particularly in his allusions to biblical characters. These characters, once revered, now seem out of place in the modern age. Eliot draws from figures of the past, attempting to bridge them with contemporary realities. He abstains from adhering to traditional poetic structures, mirroring the fragmented state of his own mind and the collective consciousness of Europe.

"I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,

Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see

At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives

Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea." (Lines 216-219).

Objectives

The objective of the paper is to exhibit Eliot's revelation of reality in his work 'The Waste Land'. This paper also expresses the concept of the poem through which contemporary reality is implied.

T. S. Eliot held a glimmer of hope for salvation, a hope that the bleak conditions of war would transform. Throughout the poem, he employs a rich tapestry of symbols representing both death and the potential rebirth of the world. The poem is structured into five distinct sections: 'The Burial of the Dead,' 'A Game of Chess,' 'The Fire Sermon,' 'Death by Water,' and 'What the Thunder Said.' Eliot meticulously presented even the most minute details, using symbols like tarot card readings, which hint at the foretelling of the future, to mask his own anxieties about living in the contemporary world. His quest for salvation is evident in his turn to Hindu philosophy for inspiration:

DA

Damyata: The boat responded
Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar
The sea was calm, your heart would have responded
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient
To controlling hands (Lines 417-421)

The repetition of 'Shantih Shantih Shantih' from Hindu scripture and the incorporation of multiple languages in his poem underscores Eliot's intention to preserve the deep-seated meanings of the text. For instance,

Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina
Quando fiam uti chelidon—O swallow swallow
Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie (Lines 426-428)

Literature Review

According to Fatima and Moayad (2015) *The Waste Land* has been almost consistently misinterpreted since its first publication. It is primarily regarded as a poem that symbolizes the chaotic life of both individuals and society in the twentieth century. It is thought to reflect the disillusionment and despair of the post-World War I generation. Many also see the poem as a reflection of Eliot's disillusionment with the moral decay of post-World War I Europe.

According to Mohammad Ataullah Nuri (2013) The single most prominent aspect of both the form and content of *The Waste Land* is fragmentation. Eliot used fragmentation in his poetry both to demonstrate the chaotic state of modern existence and to juxtapose literary texts against one another.

History in *The Waste Land*

T. S. Eliot also references historical events, notably the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria, which played a significant role in precipitating World War I. The poem adopts the form of a dramatic monologue, weaving through various speakers, places, and timeframes. Eliot introduces the character Marie Louise Larisch, who reminisces about her hometown of Munich and her time spent sledding and adventuring with her cousin, Archduke Ferdinand. However, the nostalgic recollection is disrupted by the grim reality of the Archduke's assassination, an event that irrevocably altered the course of history, leading to the deaths of millions. The poem reflects on the ambitions of European nations to assert their dominance, against a backdrop of widespread political instability.

Summer surprised us, coming over to the Starnbergersee
With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,
And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.
And when we were children, staying at the archduke's,
My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
In the mountains, there you feel free. (Lines 8-17)

World War I precipitated a profound sense of confusion and disillusionment. Several kingdoms disintegrated, and numerous nations collapsed under political upheaval. The aftermath was a landscape dotted with ruined structures and individuals left bereft, struggling with personal turmoil, and unable to find solace for the losses they endured. Eliot's 'The Waste Land' poignantly portrays life in post-war Great Britain, depicting a barren land devoid of life and vitality. The degradation of the River Thames, once majestic, mirrors this desolation; it is no longer pure, littered with the refuse of human existence and reflecting the loss of human innocence and chastity.

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.

Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.
The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.

(Lines 171-178)

Cultural Changes in Europe

The aftermath of World War I saw a significant migration of people to cities, primarily in search of employment opportunities, as many lost their livelihoods in the countryside with the decline of aristocracy. The early 20th century witnessed profound cultural shifts. The music transitioned from symphonies to pop music, a shift highlighted by the poet's irked reference to 'o o o o that Shakespearean rag'. This line encapsulates the distortion and disintegration of traditional values in modern society, suggesting how World War I catalyzed the degradation of longstanding beliefs.

T. S. Eliot's personal struggles resonate within the poem. His feelings of alienation and isolation were palpable, exacerbated by his divorce and the subsequent mental health treatment he sought to cope with inner and external traumas. His fragmented mindset is mirrored in the poem's structure, characterized by a myriad of different voices recounting memories of a bygone era. While Eliot sought to interweave biblical figures into the narrative, the sense of a world once grounded in certainties being upended is unmistakable. It seems as though there was no divine intervention to salvage the despairing minds of the people.

'The Waste Land' is a testament to the disillusionment and despondency that pervaded post-World War I society. There's an overwhelming sense of emptiness, with faith in both religion and monarchies dwindling. Eliot's deviation from traditional poetic forms and rhyme schemes further emphasizes this sense of disillusionment. Such nonconformity is emblematic of the era's loss of hope in longstanding traditions and beliefs.

Elizabeth and Leicester
Beating oars
The stern was formed
A gilded shell
Red and gold

The brisk swell
Rippled both shores
Southwest wind
Carried downstream
The peal of bells
White towers (Lines 277-287)

This poem weaves together various literary sources, mythological and religious references, and incorporates several languages. Its tapestry is a reflection of the European diaspora that arose post-World War I—people migrating from their homelands, having lost their jobs and properties.

Through the poem, T. S. Eliot seeks to foreground the traditions of Great Britain—a country that held sway over vast territories for centuries. A nation that prided itself on its rich literary legacy, epitomized by the likes of Shakespeare. Eliot's insertion of lines from *Hamlet* and *Much Ado About Nothing* is a homage to this tradition:

April is the cruelest month breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain. (Lines 1-4)

The initial lines allude to 'The Tempest', and he also borrows from 'Antony and Cleopatra', especially the reference to the tragic demise of Pompey:

Those are pearls that were his eyes.
Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head? (Lines 124 -125)

Eliot's melancholy stems from his perception of the erosion of these treasured traditions in contemporary society—a society grappling with widespread depression. The poem's epigraph is a pointed commentary on the moral decay pervading the modern world. The evident breakdown of societal norms and values is palpable. His second section, 'A Game of Chess,' metaphorically portrays individuals as mere pawns, manipulated in the grand chessboard of war:

And we shall play a game of chess,
Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door. (Lines 135-136)

Unveiling Modern Desolation

T. S. Eliot masterfully unravels a portrait of modern desolation, weaving together a rich tapestry of characters, images, and themes. Employing the stream-of-consciousness technique, Eliot creates a pervasive atmosphere of isolation and alienation through the poem's fragmented structure. The tone is ever-shifting, presenting a non-linear narrative that mirrors society's disintegration.

Many of the characters within the poem are painted as disillusioned, having lost their faith in purity. The elite of the city, for example, come across as disingenuous:

And their friends, the loitering heirs of City directors;
Departed, have left no addresses. (Lines 178 - 179)

These lines shed light on the superficiality of societal interactions, where people gather in public spaces only to discuss the lives of others, gossiping about matters as intimate as another woman's fidelity, all to distract from their own financial hardships.

The section 'A Game of Chess' unveils further degradation. It introduces us to Lil, a woman attempting to seduce a disinterested man. Her advances starkly contrast with the classical tale of Philomela, a mythological figure who was brutally raped and silenced. The juxtaposition hints at the cultural decline and moral decay of the contemporary world.

In 'The Fire Sermon', Eliot paints a vivid picture of the once-pure River Thames, now polluted with refuse and contraceptives. It's a stark commentary on society's disrespect for nature and a broader critique of the moral degradation witnessed in human behaviors. Eliot seems to advocate for renunciation of such base desires, referencing Buddhism, which teaches detachment from worldly temptations. Concurrently, he introduces Tiresias, the blind prophet from Greek mythology. Tiresias, having lived as both a man and a woman, symbolizes the complexity of human nature:

I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see
At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea. (Lines 216 - 219)

With ‘The Waste Land’, Eliot creates a kaleidoscope of references and emotions, underscoring the fragmented psyche of post-war society. Through his deft narrative and potent imagery, he offers readers a profound insight into the disillusionment of the modern age.

Search for Salvation in ‘What the Thunder Said’

In the final section of T. S. Eliot’s monumental work, ‘The Waste Land,’ titled ‘What the Thunder Said,’ the poet’s quest for salvation and redemption is acutely evident. This section is replete with references to various religious, mythological, and historical elements that signify a world in dire need of rejuvenation.

Choosing Hindu philosophy as a possible avenue for spiritual restoration is significant. Hindu philosophy, with its rich tapestry of ideas that span over centuries, emphasizes compassion, self-restraint, and the control of one’s inner passions. These principles are encapsulated in the words ‘Datta,’ ‘Dayadhvam,’ and ‘Damyata,’ derived from the Upanishads, which mean ‘give,’ ‘compassionate,’ and ‘control’ respectively.

The landscape of ‘The Waste Land’ is barren and sterile, representing a spiritual wasteland. The Fisher King, a symbol of impotence and infertility, is waiting for the rejuvenating rain:

I sat upon the shore
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
Shall I at least set my lands in order? (Lines 422 - 424)

The thunder, often a symbol of divine intervention, promises rain and, metaphorically, spiritual replenishment. Eliot’s repetition of “Shantih” three times in the end is an invocation of peace, a peace that the fragmented post-war world desperately needs.

The lines:

What is the city over the mountains
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
Falling towers
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal (Lines 370 - 375)

draw upon the ruins of once great civilizations, hinting at the cyclical nature of history, where even the mightiest cities and empires crumble.

Methodology

The annotated text serves as a guide, illuminating key themes and references in the poem. Annotations help decode Eliot's myriad references, giving readers deeper insights into the poem's layered meanings.

Echoes of *The Waste Land* in the 21st Century

T.S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land', penned in the disillusioned aftermath of World War I, provides a vivid tapestry of a world in decline, marred by disillusionment, despair, and societal decay. Its haunting portrayal of a fractured society seems eerily prescient when viewed against the contemporary backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A World Alienated

Much as Eliot's verses conveyed the sense of alienation and estrangement that pervaded post-war Europe, the pandemic has cast a similar pall of isolation globally. The once thriving and bustling epicenters of culture, commerce, and social interaction have been rendered desolate, with humans cut off not just from each other but also from their previous routines and realities.

Economic Strains and the Marginalized

Eliot's bleak portrayal finds an uncanny resonance in today's times, where many families, especially those in the lower economic strata, grapple with financial hardships. Just as the poet's world seemed devoid of hope and opportunities, the pandemic has ensnared many in a web of economic despair. Children, the hope of tomorrow, have been thrust into roles as wage earners, their educational aspirations buried under the weight of immediate survival needs.

The Digital Divide and Education

The forced transition to online learning, necessitated by the pandemic, has starkly highlighted the disparities in access to technology. Much like the spiritual and emotional desolation portrayed in 'The Waste Land,' students without the means to connect online have found themselves stranded in an educational void.

The Omnipresent Threat

Eliot's poem speaks of existential threats and the overshadowing dread of the unknown. The pervasive fear and uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic mirror this sentiment. The indiscriminate nature of the virus, affecting newborns and elders alike, paints a grim picture of vulnerability, reminiscent of the lurking dangers in Eliot's verses.

Economic Stagnation and Desolation

Eliot's world, with its symbols of stagnation and decay, finds a parallel in today's halted economies. Companies closed, farmers unable to sell their produce, and a looming economic depression reflect the decay and stagnation Eliot depicted in his fragmented narrative.

Conclusion

The cyclical nature of societal degradation and rebirth as depicted in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* manifests itself once again in our current predicament. As Eliot drew inspiration and connections from diverse sources – from Biblical characters to Greek mythologies and the Hindu Upanishads – to highlight the fragmented state of post-World War I Europe, similar echoes can be drawn to the contemporary world devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Eliot's deep concern for the moral and spiritual degradation of society, highlighted by the metaphorical pollution of the River Thames, finds its contemporary counterpart in the myriad challenges faced by societies globally, from environmental crises to socio-political upheavals and, most recently, the pandemic. The world, much like the Thames, is filled with pollutants – both tangible and intangible.

The tangible pollutants, such as the virus, have brought death and despair, quite akin to the loss of lives in World War I. The intangible pollutants, however, range from fear, mistrust, and misinformation to economic instability and disillusionment. The global lockdowns, reminiscent of war-torn desolation, have further exacerbated feelings of isolation, mirroring the alienation Eliot observed in the 20th century.

Furthermore, Eliot's observations about the loss of faith and the search for meaning resonate even more today. With religious institutions closed and people confined to their homes, many grappled with existential questions about purpose and salvation. The mass

migrations, driven by the quest for sustenance and safety, mirror the quest for salvation in a barren land, as depicted in Eliot's masterpiece.

In conclusion, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* offers more than just a historical reflection on a society reeling from war; it provides a lens through which the cyclical nature of human challenges can be viewed. Whether a result of man-made wars or natural pandemics, societies are continuously tested, but it is through these tests that resilience, rebirth, and, hopefully, enlightenment emerge.

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Echoes of T. S. Eliot's Political Ideas in Contemporary Political Thought

Sameer Harshad Pande & Nidhi Singh

Abstract

As a distinguished poet, essayist, and literary critic, T. S. Eliot's works delve into intricate societal quandaries, cultural decline, and the trials of modern civilization. This research paper endeavours to identify and analyse the core political concepts and philosophical perspectives expounded by Eliot throughout his poetry, essays, and other literary compositions on contemporary political thought. Key areas of investigation encompasses Eliot's notion of tradition and its impact on individual character and how it resonates with political institutions and governance, influencing stability and continuity; his critical examination of modern society, rapid industrialization, and urbanization, and its alignment or divergence from other political thinkers of his time; the intersection of Eliot's religious beliefs, particularly his conversion to Anglicanism, with his political views, moral principles, and notions of governance; his perspectives on authority, power structures, and the role of government, exploring the responsibilities vested in those in positions of power; his scepticism towards democratic governance and preference for an elite ruling class, relevant to contemporary debates on democracy and meritocracy; his writings on nationalism and cosmopolitanism, unveiling his views on balancing national identity and global cooperation; his conservative inclinations and cautious approach towards societal change, with implications for present-day political movements and debates on progress. The study reveals profound insights into tradition, religion, authority, and governance, providing valuable perspectives for contemporary political discourse. Eliot's works continue to resonate as a thought-provoking and influential force in shaping the understanding of politics in the present day.

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Keywords

T. S. Eliot, Political ideas, Contemporary political thought, Tradition, Governance

Introduction

T. S. Eliot was a famous poet and writer of the 20th century. However, this research paper dwells on finding arguments for consideration of him as a political philosopher. There is no definite definition of the word political thinker. But, a political thinker tries to find solutions to political and social issues with his research and thought. Political thinker, a gender-neutral word, is the one who comprehends contemporary issues and tries to give solutions for the same.

Eliot is not just known for his beautiful poems but also for his thoughts about how society should work. For example, Eliot borrows a term from an Oxford theology professor and refers to what he calls the '*pre-political area*.' It is the domain where the questions and issues are not practical but ethical, even theological, Eliot asserts, and that domain, he concludes, is the proper domain for the literature of politics. (MAMBROL 2020) T. S. Eliot's concept of the '*pre-political area*' is an idea he explored in his essay titled *The Idea of a Christian Society* which was published in 1939. In this essay, Eliot discussed the relationship between Christianity and society, and he introduced the concept of the '*pre-political area*' as a crucial aspect of his political and social philosophy.

The *pre-political area* refers to the realm of human life that exists before and beyond the scope of government and politics. Eliot argues that society's well-being and moral health depend on factors that are outside the direct control of the state. These factors include culture, morality, religion, and individual ethics. According to Eliot, these elements form the foundation of a healthy and stable society. Eliot was concerned about the moral and cultural decay he saw in society during his time, particularly in the aftermath of World War I and amid the rise of totalitarian ideologies. He believed that political solutions alone could not address these issues effectively. Instead, he argued that the '*pre-political area*,' which encompasses the moral and spiritual aspects of life, needed to be restored and strengthened. The concept of the '*pre-political area*' underscores Eliot's belief that the health of a society depends not only on its political structures but also on the moral and cultural values that underpin it. By emphasizing the importance of these non-

political elements, he argued for a holistic approach to addressing the challenges of his time, advocating for a return to core principles and a recognition of their significance in shaping a just and cohesive society. These arguments and Eliot's thoughts present himself as a political philosopher who is idealist in his thought. He has a condition, a utopian social structure, which many political philosophers have.

Every thinker is a child of his time. To provide a historical context for T. S. Eliot's political philosophy, it's essential to understand the period in which he lived and wrote. T. S. Eliot's life and work were influenced by several key historical and cultural factors. The period of the early 20th Century in Europe and America was the formative years of Eliot as a poet and thinker. This period marked significant political and cultural changes. This period includes the World War I (1914-1918). The devastation and disillusionment brought about by World War I had a profound impact on the intellectual and artistic climate of the era. Many intellectuals including Eliot, grappled with the sense of shattered world order and a loss of traditional values. This period of upheaval and uncertainty influenced Eliot's exploration of cultural and spiritual renewal in his works.

Eliot's most significant political essays, such as *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1942) and *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), were written in the interwar years. This period was marked by economic instability, political extremism, and the rise of totalitarian regimes in Europe. This was another phase when Eliot's writings reflected his concern for the moral and cultural decay he observed in society.

Similarly, he has a comprehensive view of political and economic contemporary issues. The economic period of The Great Depression brought hardships of the Great Depression in the 1930s and added to the social and political challenges of the time. Eliot was interested in the role of culture and religion in addressing these crises and promoting social cohesion. Eliot's intellectual development was also shaped by his engagement with various philosophical and theological traditions in that period which included his understanding of Anglicanism and his interest in the works of philosophers like St. Augustine. These influences contributed to his exploration of the relationship between Christianity and society.

The latter part of this period made Eliot a key figure in the literary modernist movement, which sought to break with conventional forms and experiment with new ways of expression. This artistic context influenced his writing style and themes, as he grappled with the fragmentation and dislocation of modern life.

Objectives

The research paper as discussed earlier has a broader objective. First, to understand T. S. Eliot's political beliefs, his thoughts about politics, mainly in his writings like 'The Idea of a Christian Society' and 'Notes towards the Definition of Culture.' Second, To explore the main ideas he talked in his political writings like what he thought about tradition, culture, religion, and the role of intellectuals in society. Third, To find how things were after World War I and during the rise of modernism and this will help us to understand what shaped his political thinking. Fourth, To find out the importance of T. S. Eliot's ideas and views in today's politics and look at speeches, books, or movements where people echo his ideas.

Research Methodology

This research paper will be primarily descriptive and analytical, aiming to explore and analyse T. S. Eliot's political ideas and their influence on contemporary political thought. The paper also examines Eliot's ideas such as 'The Idea of a Christian Society' and 'Notes towards the Definition of Culture,' to extract and understand his political ideas. The research aims to provide valuable insights into the importance of Eliot's ideas in contemporary politics or international relations.

Eliot's Contribution to Political Thought

T. S. Eliot's contemporary political thought was shaped by the tumultuous events of his time, particularly during the early to mid 20th century. His essays and writings offer insights into his evolving political views. The first contemporary idea which influenced Eliot and vice-versa is his writing on cultural renewal. Eliot believed in the importance of culture in maintaining social order and cohesion. He argued that a healthy society requires a strong cultural foundation. In his essay 'Notes Towards the Definition of Culture' (1948), Eliot explores the significance of culture and its role in preserving civilization. His famous quote, 'Culture may even be described simply as that which makes life worth living. And it is what justifies other peoples and other generations in

saying, when they contemplate the remains and the influence of an extinct civilization that it was worthwhile for that civilization to have existed.’ (T. S. Eliot) Summarizes his understanding and efforts for cultural renewal. Eliot asks society to hold cultural values as ideal for social change.

Another area of concern for Eliot is Materialism. He is a critic of materialism especially of modern materialistic and secular trends. In his essay ‘The Hollow Men’ (1925), and through his poetry, he expressed concerns about the spiritual emptiness and moral decay brought about by materialism and the loss of traditional values. ‘We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!’ These lines immediately set the tone for the poem, depicting a group of people who are spiritually empty and hollow. They are stuffed with material possessions but lack a deeper, meaningful existence. This hollowness is a direct critique of the spiritual vacuum that can result from an excessive focus on material wealth and consumerism.

Eliot also expresses concerns about the loss of traditional values in the face of materialism. In *The Hollow Men*, he writes, ‘Shape without form, shade without colour, Paralysed force, and gesture without motion.’ (Scofield and Martin 1988) Here, Eliot suggests that the individuals he portrays in the poem have lost their spiritual and moral bearings. They have become shapeless and colourless, devoid of the values and principles that once gave meaning to their lives. This can be seen as a commentary on how materialism can erode the moral and spiritual foundations of society. This colourlessness has also caused the loss of political will among the leaders. The corruption and decay in national character can also be linked with the same thought that Eliot presents. Throughout the poem, Eliot paints a picture of moral decay and apathy. He writes: ‘This is the way the world ends not with a bang but a whimper.’ (Cheshire 2021) Here, he suggests that the pursuit of material gain and hedonism has led to a moral decline in which significant events or changes occur quietly and without a sense of purpose. This reflects Eliot’s belief that materialism can lead to a lack of moral responsibility and a sense of futility. Eliot, a devout Christian, often incorporated religious imagery and references in his work. In ‘The Hollow Men’, he includes religious allusions that underscore his critique of materialism and the loss of spirituality. For example, he writes: ‘for thine is the kingdom between the idea and the reality between the motion And the act falls the Shadow’. (*The Hollow Men*) Here, the mention of ‘the kingdom’ and the concept

of a shadow between idea and reality alludes to Christian themes of salvation and the distance between human actions and divine ideals. It reinforces Eliot's message that materialism has separated individuals from their spiritual beliefs and values.

Another area of Eliot's thoughts can be understood is his stand on Anti-Totalitarianism. Eliot was deeply troubled by the rise of totalitarian regimes in Europe during his lifetime, particularly Nazism and Communism. He expressed his opposition to these ideologies and their disregard for individual liberty and human dignity. T. S. Eliot's stance against totalitarianism is indeed a significant aspect of his intellectual and moral concerns. He lived during a tumultuous period in history, witnessing the rise of totalitarian regimes in Europe, particularly Nazism in Germany and Communism in the Soviet Union. Eliot was deeply troubled by the consequences of these ideologies and their impact on individual liberty and human dignity. Eliot submits a sophisticated, if aloof, deconstruction of Fascist totalitarianism, interrogating its neo-Pagan, en masse idolization of Mussolini in a heady brew of politics, culture, and religion. (Araujo 2017)

This idea can be reflected in Eliot's renowned poem *The Waste Land* (1922). While the poem is complex and multifaceted, it contains passages that suggest a sense of disillusionment and despair, which can be interpreted as a response to the upheaval caused by totalitarian regimes. For example, in the section titled 'The Fire Sermon' Eliot describes a world filled with corruption and spiritual decay, possibly alluding to the moral bankruptcy of totalitarian regimes.

In his essay 'The Idea of a Christian Society', Eliot explicitly addresses the dangers of totalitarianism. (T. S. Eliot) He argues that a truly Christian society must be founded on certain moral and ethical principles, and he condemns both Nazi fascism and Soviet communism for their disregard of individual rights and human dignity. He criticizes the idea that the state should have absolute power and control over every aspect of life, as was evident in these totalitarian regimes. Eliot's writings showcase how poetry can show us the possibility, despite religious in nature, greater necessity for a predominantly secular age than for a religious one. (Scofield and Martin 1988)

Against totalitarian thoughts and ideas, Eliot propounded individualism and believed in the importance of safeguarding individual liberty. In his essay, 'Notes Towards the Definition of Culture' (1948), he argues for the preservation of cultural and intellectual traditions that value individuality and freedom of thought. Totalitarian ideologies, in

contrast, suppress dissent and enforce conformity, which goes against Eliot's vision of a society where individuals have the freedom to think and express themselves. Eliot was not shy about expressing his political views in his writings and public statements. During World War II, he contributed to the anti-Nazi propaganda efforts through his work at the BBC. His broadcasts, such as 'The Moral Basis of Democracy' (1940), reiterated his opposition to totalitarianism and his belief in the moral and spiritual foundations of a democratic society. He believed in preserving the moral and spiritual values as essential for a just and free society, in stark contrast to the dehumanizing effects of totalitarian ideologies.

However, Eliot was also critical of excessive individualism and believed in the importance of community and social cohesion. His works, such as 'The Rock' (1934) and 'Murder in the Cathedral' (1935), reflect his exploration of these themes. T.S. Eliot's criticism of excessive individualism and his emphasis on the importance of community and social cohesion are recurring themes in his works. He was deeply concerned about the breakdown of social bonds and the erosion of traditional values, which he saw as a consequence of unchecked individualism. In 'The Rock' Eliot serves as a reflection on the state of society and the need for collective responsibility. In this work, Eliot expresses his concerns about the moral and spiritual fragmentation of society. He argues that a healthy community must be founded on shared values and a sense of collective purpose. Eliot writes, 'the endless cycle of idea and action, Endless invention, endless experiment, Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness; Knowledge of speech, but not of silence; Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word. All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance, all our ignorance brings us nearer to death, But nearness to death no nearer to God.' (The Information Age 2023) These lines suggest that the relentless pursuit of individual knowledge and action, divorced from a sense of stillness, silence, and higher spiritual truth, can lead to spiritual emptiness and social fragmentation.

In his play 'Murder in the Cathedral', Eliot explores the similar thought of the conflict between individual conscience and social cohesion. The play is based on the assassination of Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and it delves into the moral dilemma faced by Becket as he confronts the demands of both his individual conscience and his duty to the Church and society. The play raises questions about the role of individuals

within a larger community and the sacrifices required for the greater good. One of the key speeches in the play is Becket's reflection on martyrdom, where he states: 'The last temptation is the greatest treason: To do the right deed for the wrong reason.' Here, Eliot underscores the importance of doing what is right not just for personal gain or individual satisfaction, but for the sake of the larger community and its moral integrity.

Another political thought that Eliot propounds in his writing is Conservatism. While Eliot did not align himself with any political party, his views on culture, religion, and society often resonated with conservative thought. His writings emphasized the preservation of tradition and the importance of established institutions. Conservatism is related to the thought of the Preservation of Traditions. Eliot was a staunch advocate for the preservation of cultural and literary traditions. In his essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919), he argues that artists and writers should engage with and build upon the literary and cultural heritage of the past. He believes that true creativity emerges from a deep understanding and respect for tradition. Eliot writes: 'No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists.' (Eliot-p.36) This perspective aligns with conservative values of valuing and preserving the wisdom and achievements of previous generations.

Conservatism also means giving importance to established institutions. Eliot recognized the importance of established institutions, both in culture and in society. He was a devout Anglican Christian and expressed his belief in the role of the Church as a stabilizing force in society. In his essay, 'The Idea of a Christian Society' (1939), Eliot argues for the significance of religious institutions in providing a moral framework for a functioning society. He writes: 'A Christian society is not going to arrive until most of us really want it: and we are not going to want it until we become fully Christian.' This reflects his view that established religious institutions, like the Church, can play a crucial role in maintaining social cohesion and moral values.

Conservatism also means a thought of Critique of Modernity. Eliot's conservative inclinations are also evident in his critique of modernity. He was critical of the excesses and disruptions brought about by rapid social and cultural changes. In his work *The Waste Land* (1922), he portrays a world in disarray, where traditional values have eroded, and individuals are alienated from one another. This can be seen as a commentary on the

negative consequences of modernity and the need to hold onto enduring values.

Another side of this political thought is scepticism toward Political Ideologies. Eliot expressed scepticism toward radical political ideologies, particularly in the face of the totalitarian regimes of his time. He believed that these ideologies often led to the erosion of individual liberty and moral decay. This has been discussed earlier.

Another political thought of Eliot is T. S. Eliot's scepticism of democracy, a notable aspect of his political thought, and this scepticism is evident in his essay 'The Class and the Elite' (1923). In this essay, Eliot explores his concerns about the limitations and challenges of democracy, particularly in the context of culture and governance. He is a critic of Mass Culture. In 'The Class and the Elite', Eliot expresses reservations about the impact of democracy on culture. He argues that a purely democratic society tends to prioritize mass culture over high culture, which he views as a threat to the preservation of intellectual and artistic traditions. Eliot is concerned that in a democratic society, culture may become increasingly shallow and commercialized, catering to the lowest common denominator. He writes: 'The great works of the past were produced with the belief that an élite existed who were capable of understanding and enjoying them. It was further believed that such an élite was desirable for the future of civilization; that without its civilization could not progress, and that if it were not preserved, it would disappear.' Eliot thus underscores the idea that an intellectual and cultural elite is necessary to safeguard and cultivate the highest achievements of human civilization.

Eliot also emphasizes Leadership and Expertise. Eliot argues for the importance of leadership and expertise in society. He contends that not all individuals are equally capable of making informed and wise decisions, particularly in complex matters of governance and culture. He believes that society should rely on the guidance of an educated and discerning elite who can provide direction and make decisions for the greater good. He states, 'The élite [should] maintain the standards of culture and initiate the rest of society in appreciation and understanding of them. The masses, in a healthy society, will take an interest in their élite, and will respect the authority of the élite, in the proportion that they are led by the élite and influenced by them.' This viewpoint emphasizes the role of an intellectual and cultural elite in shaping the values and direction of society.

The extreme thought of Eliot of this thought can be observed in his ideas and Scepticism of Universal Suffrage. Eliot questions the idea of universal suffrage, arguing that not everyone is equally qualified to participate in the political process. He believes that a more selective and discerning approach to voting is necessary to ensure that those who hold power are truly capable of making informed decisions. He writes, 'One of the signs of a healthy political or social philosophy is its attitude to universal suffrage. It is the mark of a philosophy which takes into account the complexity of life, which recognizes the importance of differentiation and the necessity for organization.' Eliot suggests that universal suffrage, without proper qualifications or considerations, can lead to poor governance and the erosion of cultural and intellectual values. He argues for the importance of an educated and discerning elite in preserving culture and providing leadership. Eliot's views on democracy align with his broader concerns about the erosion of tradition and the importance of preserving intellectual and cultural heritage in a rapidly changing world.

T. S. Eliot's views on international relations are also very important to understand. It is very evident in his essay 'Thoughts after Lambeth' (1931). This essay provides insights into Eliot's thoughts on diplomacy, foreign policy, and the role of the Church in international affairs. In this regard, Eliot criticises the Political Idealism. In 'Thoughts after Lambeth' Eliot criticizes what he sees as the idealistic approach to international relations. He expresses scepticism about the belief that diplomacy alone can solve complex global problems. Eliot argues that a realistic understanding of human nature and power politics is necessary for effective foreign policy. In this regard, Eliot writes: The mistakes that we make and that we seem always doomed to make, in international relations, arise from one fundamental error: the belief that we can make agreements with others which will change their natures. Eliot's critique reflects his belief that idealistic attempts to change the behaviour of nations through agreements and treaties often overlook the fundamental motivations and interests that drive international politics. Eliot's view emphasizes the potential of religious institutions to contribute to the ethical dimension of international relations.

The main idea of Eliot revolves around pragmatism and realism too which is an important school in International Relations. Eliot advocates for a more pragmatic and realistic approach to international affairs where he emphasizes the importance of recognizing the limitations of diplomacy and the need to prioritize national interests.

In this regard, he writes: ‘We need more willingness to face unpleasant facts and more willingness to act upon them without the disastrous delay of endless talking.’ Eliot’s call for a willingness to confront harsh realities aligns with his scepticism of idealism and his belief in the necessity of practical, results-oriented diplomacy.

Conclusion

This research paper ‘The Echoes of T. S. Eliot’s political ideas in contemporary political thought’ resonates across the landscape of contemporary political thought. The facts and the discussion offer an enduring insight into the complex interplay between culture, religion, and politics interweaving the political thoughts of Eliot. Throughout this research, the key facets of Eliot’s political philosophy, including his emphasis on the pre-political area, the importance of culture, his Christian ethos, and his critique of materialism and totalitarianism. These ideas, rooted in the early to mid-20th century, continue to hold relevance and significance in our contemporary world.

T. S. Eliot’s enduring relevance as a political thinker lies in his unwavering commitment to the idea that society cannot be sustained by politics alone. He reminds us that the health of a nation is intricately linked to its cultural and spiritual foundations. His call for a return to Christian values and the recognition of the moral dimension of society underscores the enduring tension between individualism and community, secularism, and faith, and the need for a broader ethical framework in the realm of politics. While Eliot is primarily celebrated as a literary giant, his contributions to political thought should not be overlooked. His essays, poems, and correspondence reveal a deep engagement with the pressing issues of his time and offer a thoughtful response to the challenges of modernity. Eliot’s multidimensional perspective on politics encourages us to consider the profound impact of culture, religion, and tradition on the dynamics of governance and societal well-being.

In an era marked by rapid change and ideological polarization, T. S. Eliot’s legacy as a political thinker serves as a reminder of the enduring importance of examining the cultural and ethical dimensions of politics. His work challenges us to think beyond the immediate and the political, urging us to consider the timeless values that sustain societies and civilizations. Thus, considering T. S. Eliot as a political thinker enriches our understanding of the intricate relationship between politics, culture, and morality, offering insights that remain pertinent and enlightening in our contemporary political discourse.

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Traversing Boundaries: An Analysis of the Unremitting Psychic Unity in *The Waste Land*

Sruthi S.

Abstract

Known as 'Pope of Russel Square' in the history of English literature from the 20th century, T. S. Eliot's, literary ingenuity augmented the modernist writings. 'The Waste Land' is one such eventuality that, retrospectively from the publication, permuted worldwide, giving boundless definitions and ceaseless critical appraisals. Contriving the idiom of modern poetry, his career as a part never went over the hill since it was chiselled out of the emotional and intellectual retaliation to a gest which was his life itself. The close-grained, fragmented study of his works, has seemingly been immense and comprehensive. Being portrayed as the literary arbiter, his personal life was lucid and full of drama. The oeuvre hence hollers the zeitgeist of his era. As a philosopher, his happy hunting ground was both religion and the emphasis on conforming to the basic moral values of life. His ethical involvement with life emanates from the underlying desolation and devastation regarding his personal life. When he assiduously carried his position in poetry, politics, and literature, he was tagged as heedless in his personal life. The childhood limitations sprouted out from the complications of inguinal hernia, later when he was at Harvard while studying Sanskrit and Indian philosophy, the commencement of WWI and the escape from Oxford after witnessing a society which was war-torn, a love affair with Emily Hale which closed out in two shakes of a lamb's tail and the hasty entry into wedlock with Vivienne Haigh-Wood whose alleged adultery with Bertrand Russel and her ailment that followed took a toll on his burgeoning literary career.

The shuffling was wilfully implemented, as alluded to by many critics. But for a feeler who, exasperated by the atrocities of war, could not necessarily keep the word restrained to the end and the overscrupulous side of Eliot could not have missed the slightest of the change either.

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Keywords

Psychic unity, Devastation, Relationships, Faith, Resurrection, Spirituality, Asceticism, Buddhism

Introduction

The Waste Land, officially published in 1922, is acclaimed for the colossal number of images. Eliot, deeply influenced by the Indian traditions, intertwined them with the former, inoculating the East into the West. For him, the Upanishads and folklore were streaks of light that fell on the dark and disillusioned way of writing. Starting from *The Burial of the Dead*, till *What the Thunder Said*, the poem proceeds with unwitting ease while the reader rather wobbles through a series of events stretching from the legend of the Holy Grail, the Fisher King to the immediate British society. Part five is the denouement, where the cardinal values referred to in Sanskrit, Damyata, Datta, and Dayadhvam from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad are mentioned, seemingly reshuffled by Eliot to 'Datta', 'Dayadhvam', and 'Damyata'; meaning 'Give', 'Sympathise' and 'Restrain'. The shuffling was wilfully implemented, as alluded to by many critics. But for a feeler who, exasperated by the atrocities of war, could not necessarily keep the word restrained to the end and the overscrupulous side of Eliot could not have missed the slightest of the change either.

In Sanskrit, when the three groups; the celestial beings, the human beings, and demons approached the creator Brahma, the latter, comprehensively acknowledged the positions of each group, categorized them as the ones who savour all the palatial conveniences, the ones who practise hoarding out of intense greed and the ones who are callous. He uttered the word 'Da' to each group without elucidation. Then, extrapolating, inferred the meaning, which was to do away with sensuality by restraining, to put an end to greed by giving, and finally to end the utmost savagery and to reinstate sympathy. Eliot, as a juggler, skilfully handles the shift of scenes, effortlessly jumping from the Chapel Perilous to the brim of the Ganges, seeking aid in Buddhism while the Western culture collapses, with the constant quest for 'Shantih' the mythical solace where there will be a slight ray of hope. The work and its relevance are still on with the progress of time. The critical analysis of the work about any prevailing situation will give a considerably good explanation because, culturally, everyone faces similar issues and as someone aptly interpreted, there is nothing such as personal in this world because some way or

the other everyone is surfing a big giant wave, facing the crests and troughs. If not none, humanity is always knit together in the face of destruction and devastation. That is why the emotions that Eliot portrayed outshoot the cultural boundaries and are universal.

Objectives

Since the time of publication of *The Waste Land*, innumerable studies have been conducted, reviews have been jotted down and still, the scope of further interpretations stays on like a ceaseless springhead. The primary objective here is to bring about the cultural and psychic bridging of the West and the East. What the poem implies in the psyche of the people and its laudable universality.

Literature Review

Literature, regardless of whatever the times may be, is always considered as something that promotes the betterment of living, a way of life. According to Stephan Spender, ‘The central theme of *The Waste Land* is the breakdown of civilization, and the conditioning of those who live within it by that breakdown so that every situation is a symptom of the collapse of values’ (106). The interdisciplinary approach to linking literature and psychology is marked to be a pathbreaking turn in the history of literature from all around the world. With the poem being considered as the spiritual autobiography of Eliot, the analysis tends to be of greater interest to the critics. Notably Harold Bloom, in his work says.

“The question that Eliot might, in some form or other, have asked himself—What is ‘mine’ about my poem? is a version of this problem, and it belongs to an important line of nineteenth-century thought” (Bloom 60). The line is important because it was one of the ways the nineteenth century undertook to defend the status of human endeavor against the implications of scientific determinism, and its consequences mattered because the way the question is answered affects the value that is attributed to art.

The essence of the poem was unique and different. It was not restricted to the premises of London. Like the churning power of water, he wanted to take everything in. Historically, it was the experiences of a mind, a single, powerful consciousness, and socially, it was a mirror holding against the contemporary society.

Methodology

The paper has been written purely concentrating on the qualitative aspect, analysing the poem from the theoretical framework, thoroughly examining the poem, analysing various secondary sources, predominantly books and websites.

Analysis

The Waste Land is often compared to a fabric that has been woven from the threads taken from different regions. The emotional thread outshoots the boundaries of cultures. *The Burial of the Dead*, the first section, spells out the beauty of death. The inability or the strain to get out of the death-in-life circumstances in *The Waste Land*. This portion is presented as a reverie with accolades to Ezekiel and Ecclesiastics. 'April is the cruellest month' since it wraps the dead land with snow, unhurriedly allowing people to let slip of the reality or what lies beneath it, that is the stark reality of life (Eliot, *The Waste Land*-01). The trepidation or the fear, growing out of a calamity-stricken society and the perturbation regarding a potentially vague future, with concerns regarding what will be fruiting out of a doomed land, is what is bothering the speaker, or Eliot himself. The devastation caused by two important occurrences, WW1, and the Spanish Flu of 1918-19, were beyond comprehension, more than that Eliot and his wife were also among the ones who were affected by the contagion. The time and scene were not the same, the deaths caused by the war and the illness and the burial of the dead were happening. The title refers to the prayer from the Anglican prayer book and its prayer for the burial of the dead. 'Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. We all are in the dust in the end.' (Genesis 3.19, King James Version). The sudden shift of the setting and the jumbling happen in the first part itself, suggesting how instantaneously life changes. When the speaker sees a noisy flock of people galloping over the London bridge, whom death spared, he contemplates their existence, extending his doubt about whether they are dead or alive, or are affected by the death of someone dear and moving perforce, like what Dante wrote in his 'Inferno', 'so long a train of folk that, that I could never have believed death had undone so many.' (01-03) The meeting with war veteran Stetson, with whom the speaker fought the ancient Mylae War, goes morbid with him enquiring about the corpse that the former planted. The confrontation between the modern and the ancient aggregates with the realisation that everything remains the same, regardless of the era or time. War and its deadly outcomes remain the same. The last line, attributed to

the French poet, Charles Baudelaire, 'You, hypocrite reader, my likeness, my brother.' (Translated.qtd.in *The Waste Land*, 76). According to the poet, Stetson is everyone; the reader and Eliot himself.

The Game of Chess is about women, mainly about women in the world and their relationship with men and how they get trapped in the repetitive and tedious cycle. With Cleopatra in a chair 'brushed' like a throne, in a heavily embellished room with a curving of Philomel who, according to Greek mythology was raped by her brother-in-law, and to ease her pain, the Gods turned her into a beautiful nightingale with sweet voice. But nothing could cut back the pain endured and she still cries 'Jug Jug' to her tormentor. The conversation between two women in a pub in the East end of London about Lil and her troubled marriage. 'HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME' (Line 141) to question the marriage, relationships, sexual relations etc, but no one dares. Perhaps, the only way to escape is like Ophelia, in Hamlet, by feeling the dead-cold water; the only possible way to get out. In *The Fire Sermon*, the point of convergence is a deserted Thames where the nymphs or the prostitutes have left after an eventful night, leaving everything cluttered. He juxtaposes the scene with 'Sweet Thames run softly till I end my song' (183) famous lines from Prothalamion by Edmund Spenser, for celebrating an engagement, stressing the beauty and perfection of the bond despite the hard plights in life. Eliot mourns about a land that lost its charm and spiritualism and now is like an empty bottle. The advent of Sweeney to a brothel, the violent misdemeanour by Tereus on his sister-in-law Philomela, the blind seer Tiresias who 'witnesses' the love-making scene, certainly devoid of the element of love, of the typist and a young man. Tiresias, according to Greek mythology, was condemned by the gods to spend seven years as a man and seven years as a woman. The constant desire to experience earthly pleasures often makes the modern man burn like fire. He acknowledges both emotions. Like how fast the shallow waters consume one *The Death by Water* is the shortest of them all. The one-on-one confrontation of death and time, the drowning of Phlebas, the Phoenician sailor from *The Burial of the Dead*, Eliot urges for the resurrection of the sailor and concomitantly yearns for the resurrection of humanity as a whole. The fifth part of the poem exhibits perceptibly the attributions to Indian ethos, What the Thunder Said. The paths of the mountain where Jesus Christ walked in agony and in the garden where he was crucified for the sins of humanity, no traces of water be found, only thunder without rain. Water is the basic element for the survival of humanity; yet even after

the sacrifice, no trace of water can be seen. The land after the war; the destruction of places and people. The motherly crying, cracks, explosions, falling towers, high-pitched sounds— everything seems like a reverie. The hour of twilight where everything is covered with violet light, is the twilight of a civilization, too. But violet is the colour of baptism, too. So, that can be a beginning as well; the baptism of the waste land. Eliot, more than Buddhism, was preoccupied with Christianity to a great extent that he was fascinated by the qualities of spiritual discipline, empathy, charity, etc. Most of these Christian doctrines form the foundation for many of his works. The detachment from the worldly senses and inclination towards spiritual discipline. The fifth part consolidates the same. The journey to the perilous chapel, its collapsed grave, a lifeless chapel without windows, everything demonstrates the hopelessness sprouting out of the lack of spirituality. But the lightning and damp wind bring rain to wet the thirst of a barren and hopeless wasteland. This soothing feeling suddenly shifts Eliot's attention to the Ganges. The precipitation from the Himalayas, the highest point, soothes the inquisitive mind of the poet. The answer lies here. According to the Hindu mythology, Lord Brahma is the Creator. For a poet who has a great inclination towards Eastern beliefs, who craves the revival of a barren land, who laments over the destruction of noble values, the presence of a creator is crucial. 'Datta' (to give), 'Dayadhvam' (to sympathise), and 'Damyata' (to self-control); the three 'Da's should be practised to give up lustful thoughts and pleasures associated with it, to show sympathy and compassion to other people regardless of the class and to control one's mind to have sound thoughts, happy life, just like an expert sailor sailing a boat.

Discussion

The time when Eliot was busy with work, in India, nationalism intensified with the return of Mahatma Gandhi. A series of agitations including the tragic Jallianwala Bagh massacre took place, indiscriminate firing at a crowd including women and children that led to the Non-cooperation Movement. India was struggling against the British Empire. The nucleus of the suffering, the restive masses, everything was the same. The viaduct Eliot constructed instantaneously from the perilous church to the brims of the Ganges thus could not be considered as an accidental one. Anguish, in any form, exceeds the frontiers of language or culture. Its quintessence is universal. Every religion focuses on leading humans to salvation. The prophetic experience of the divine takes place through

human society, through the events of history, and the utterances of great inspired figures. For Eliot, asceticism was the key to salvation. Upanishads and the epics were not the sole influence on Eliot. But he was heavily predisposed to oriental philosophy, strictly out of how it is engrossed in making the lives a lot more uncomplicated and facile, making mankind wiser and calmer, and the fulcrum is meditation. The graveness of the situation prevailing in the waste land, with zero humanity and meaningless rustle and bustle, the spiritual zestfulness can only be wangled through prehistoric thinking, just the way Lord Buddha and St. Augustine promulgated. The locus where the doctrines of these two converge is in the suggestion of a panacea to outshoot all the earthly emotions and salaciousness; asceticism, the rigorous abstention from self-indulgence.

Through those 400 lines, Eliot blended the conditions of culture and society. It encompasses waywardness, egoism, and artificiality as the main characteristics of the current culture. The constant pursuit of a sanctuary to guarantee human survival. The cross-references often imply this quest. In 1917, in his *Tradition and Individual Talent*, Eliot considered poetry not as an expression of personality but as an escape from personality. The gradual development through the years has carved him to an extent that all his experiments were put together to address the common danger, the world truth. As Elizabeth Drew points out, 'All that he can do is escape into poetry and objectively dramatize his experience, a situation where he can create in his fragmentary images the mood of ironic, cynical, nostalgic repulsion and of unromantic disillusionment which mirrors his condition' (663). The cultural psychological and emotional attribution is universal here, traversing all the boundaries of time and distance. To be precise, the projection of the subjective self is to be reflected in the objective realities of the world. For him, the personal traumas he experienced have turned him into the redeemer. This is how the waste land can be called Eliot's spiritual autobiography. Oriental philosophy and Buddhism influenced Eliot mainly because of the experimental dimension it possessed. Although modern Buddhism, with philosophical schools in the West, has progressed remarkably, the word 'Buddhist Enlightenment' still carries the pure essence of it, that is to say, a 'systematic updating of the intellectual foundations of the religion to allow a clear and consistent set of teachings on modern issues to emerge' (Keown 121). This is where the psychic unity still holds the flame. The complications arising out of the dubiety, especially in modern times, L.G. Salinger appreciates the fact that Eliot found a means of expression in poetry for the surface and depths of a representative modern

mind. He also feels that Eliot displays a keen awareness of an intensely sensitive mind. His multi-lingual scholarship contributes to a framework of ideas in which modern English poetry is today read and interpreted. Eliot, Salinger rightly asserts, 'restored intellectual dignity of English poetry'(443).

Conclusion

The Waste Land encompasses a rich flow of cultures. As time passes, the initial meanings are being taken into, modified, and incorporated to get amalgamated into the progress of time and the new thirstful minds. The poem, ending with the benediction, shanti, stands for the ultimate peace that passes all understanding and it does not remain plausible for one particular group, religion, or area. Irrespective of the cultural and external boundaries, the emotions of the people in the phase of chaos and disaster remain the same. Thus parallelism happens in the psyche. This feeling of 'oneness', though during hardships, is extremely important for the World to thrive. This essentialism was, is, and will be of greater importance for humanity. If a poem could essentially convey all sorts of morality and keep on enlightening generations, it in all ways can be considered a treasured one. This universality is what keeps *The Waste Land* holding the line against the appraisals and the test of time.

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Tiresias in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*: Exploring Transgender Representation in the Modern Context

Somya Rajoriya & Muskan Kaurav

Abstract

This research paper delves into the representation of transgender identity through the character of Tiresias in Thomas Stearns Eliot's 'The Waste Land,' a landmark modern poem that explores life in London in the aftermath of World War I. Tiresias is the character appearing in 'The Fire Sermon' section of the poem who transverses both male and female genders thereby emerging as an embodiment of gender fluidity. This research portrays Tiresias as transgender to discuss transgender representation in the modern context. For this, the study draws upon mythological allusions, literary analysis, queer theory, artistic expressions, and legal initiatives across the world. The research aims to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the transgender experiences including the struggles and challenges faced by them in the contemporary world to foster empathy. The findings of this study signal the beginning of the Trans era that holds promising possibilities for the future of transindividuals.

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Keywords

Transgender, Literary analysis, Queer theory

Introduction

‘Orlando had become a woman—there is no denying it. But in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatsoever to alter their identity.’ (Woolf 1928)

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965), the 1948 Nobel Prize in Literature recipient was a character of great intellect and reflection. He is perhaps best known for the famous poem *The Waste Land*, published in 1922. The poem is often considered as an epitome of modern poetry. It showcases Eliot's innovative approach to poetry combined with his signature blend of modern style, classical allusions, complex exploration of themes, and his ability to capture the fragmented spirit of the post-World War I era. It is set in the wake of World War I in a period of turmoil, destruction, and social disorder that typified the early twentieth century. 'The Fire Sermon' is the third section of *The Waste Land*. Within the complex tapestry of voices, references, and perspectives in this third section, one character emerges as an intriguing figure: Tiresias. Tiresias, the mythological figure appears as a sightless and detached observer in the poem. As a spectator, he has a major impact on the debate on gender identity. This study portrays Tiresias as transgender to raise interrogations about the traditional norms of gender and sexuality. To his gender-fluidity, he symbolizes the sensibilities of both sexes. The background of this research lies in the expanding awareness of transgender representation in literature and various forms of media. The journey of transgenders is marked with self-discovery and self-acceptance. Therefore, it is crucial to explore the experiences of the untiring, courageous, and resilient transgender community. In recent years, discussions surrounding transgenders have gained massive attention in society. So, it becomes important to investigate the contributions of literary works written decades ago to these ongoing conversations. Drawing parallels from cultural allusions, and mythologies and exploring present-day comparisons, the study strives for transgender empowerment in the contemporary world.

Objectives

The objectives of this research are

- To critically analyze the character of Tiresias and its significance as a symbol of gender-fluidity.
- To comprehend the importance and contribution of Queer theory in the literary representation of transgender identity.
- To assess transgender representation in the modern context by exploring various forms of media including cinema and artworks.

- To exemplify legal initiatives taken worldwide in identifying the areas where improvement is achieved and propose measures for more respectful transgender inclusion.

Literature Review

Literature has provided a platform for transgender representation. It has gained noteworthy attention from scholars and readers for the understanding and acceptance of diverse gender identities. *The Waste Land* embraces the character of Tiresias signifying gender-fluidity. It provides the symbolism of Tiresias as a subtle figure who challenges traditional binary categorizations. The literary works of Queer theorists such as Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) and so on showcase the themes of the social construction of gender and performativity which are helpful in forming the new definition of Gender.

Modern literature has also proven to be an effective way for the authentic portrayal of the third gender. Recognition of diverse identities and Intersectionality are the important factors in reshaping the experiences of transgenders in the modern literature. Novels like 'Middlesex' (2002) by Geoffrey Eugenides, Imogen Binnie's 'Nevada' (2013), Janet Mock's 'Redefining Realness' (2014), and Leslie Feinberg's 'Stone Butch Blues' (1993) delve into the emotional landscapes of transgenders unveiling the internal conflicts, societal biases, and quests for self-discovery defining their journeys. These works of literature reflect the aspects of gender diversity which inspires readers to consider the complex nature of human experiences.

Methodology

This section outlines the methods used to conduct this qualitative research.

1. Literary Analysis: The primary method used is the close study of T. S. Eliot's, *The Waste Land* which involves a careful analysis of the text with a specific focus on the portrayal of Tiresias.
2. Mythological Studies: This research uses interpretations of Tiresias from Greek mythology and instances of transgender representation from Hindu mythology.
3. Queer Theory: This theoretical perspective provides insights into the exploration of non-binary identities in literature.
4. Comparative analysis and artistic expressions: This involves comparative

analysis of other literary, cinematic, art, and legal frameworks to establish connections and developments in the portrayal of transgender identities.

5. Secondary Sources: This includes an extensive analysis of relevant academic sources including scholarly research papers and articles which provide additional insights to support the research.

Analysis

The research is categorized into three sections – Mythology, Queer theory, and the Modern context.

Mythological Allusions: Exploring Transgender Narratives

Throughout the records, allusion has served as a creative patchwork of various historical, cultural, and mythological pieces into narratives. The poem depicts the transformation of the character of Tiresias reinforced by textual evidence from the poem itself. Burning as a motif here signifies transformation.

The poem states,
To Carthage then I came
Burning burning burning burning
O Lord Thou pluckest me out
O Lord Thou pluckest burning.’ (Lines 306-310)

Eliot masterly uses allusion to employ the history of Tiresias who experienced both male and female lives. This serves as an authentication of him as a transgender figure. This figure is not confined to *The Waste Land* only. In ‘Oedipus Rex’ by Sophocles, Tiresias is a blind prophet who predicts the fate of King Oedipus. This character was inspired by Greek mythology, Tiresias a blind seer of Apollo in Thebes famous for his foresight and for being transformed into a woman for seven years. Tiresias transforms from a man to a woman after coming across the two mating snakes and striking them with a stick. He later got back to his original form. This narrative illustrates the openness of Greeks to gender transformations. Moreover, the concept of gender fluidity is a recurring theme in Hindu epics. According to Hindu mythology, gender change could occur through magic, character-based gender transition, or reincarnation. The Hindu epic the ‘Mahabharata’ features Shikhandi who was assigned female at birth and was later recognized as male. He then emerges as a war hero, eventually dying on

the battlefield. Hindu gods like Ardhanarishwar (the half Shiva and half Parvati form of Mahadeva) and Vishnu (reincarnating as Krishna who also transforms into Mohini) embody both genders. Krishna's marriage to Aarvan as Mohini, followed by Aarvan's death and Mohini's mourning is commemorated annually in the Koovagam village's eighteen-day festival by the transgender community. These mythological allusions enable us to reimagine gender as a spectrum of diverse identities.

Tiresias and the Emergence of Queer Theory

“ I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
Old man with wrinkled female breasts.” (Lines 218-219)

In the above-mentioned extract, the speaker Tiresias brings in a complex and mysterious depiction of gender identity. The term ‘Old man’ refers to his male specification while ‘wrinkled female breasts’ marks his female attributes juxtaposing the traditional gender roles and expectations. This symbolism reverberates with the core ideas of Queer Theory. The portrayal can be supposed as an early exploration of concepts that later became chief components of queer theory. In this way, the inclusion of Tiresias in the poem can be considered a harbinger of the emergence of Queer Theory.

The arrival of Queer Theory during the late twentieth century in literature was propelled by the assertion to challenge and change the prevailing assumptions about gender and sexuality within literary analysis. Traditional literary criticism often acted in accordance with heteronormative and cisnormative outlooks which restricted the exploration of characters, narratives, and themes to conventional gender roles. This led to the marginalization of LGBTQ+ voices. The advent of Queer Theory was crucial to bridge this gap by recognising diverse identities. Through a multidimensional aspect, it activated literary scholars to analyze texts from a new perspective by opening up avenues to explore non-normativity in characters and subtextual queer narratives in literature. Judith Butler in her book ‘Gender Trouble’ (1990) introduced the concept of gender performativity questioning the stability of gender identities. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in her work ‘Epistemology Of The Closet’ (1990) explored issues of shame and secrecy of non- heteronormative identities.

Queer Theory gave impetus to change by challenging the long-existing normativity. Facilitating the creation of a space free from prejudices for individuals to handle their

identities, has contributed to a shift from a narrow-minded perspective to a broad perspective in society to become receptive to acknowledging and celebrating these diverse gender identities.

Transgender Representation in the Modern Context

In a landmark judgment that reverberated across India and beyond, the legal recognition of transgenders as the 'third gender' was solidified by the National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India verdict on 15 April 2014.

(Case Number: 400 of 2012 Bench: K. S. Radhakrishnan and A. K. Sikri)

This remarkable move marked a major turning point in the recognition of the third-gender community's existence.

Although the transgender community has slightly progressed in terms of visibility and public acceptability, there are still enormous obstacles to overcome. Discrimination in accommodations, work, and healthcare based on gender identification; homelessness as a result of assault and housing restrictions; violence including sexual assault and even murder eventually contributing to their mental health issues, limited access to gender-affirming care like hormone therapy due to financial constraints and so on. Their personal struggles include rejection by families and friends, social isolation, and complications in the search for romantic partners. Regardless of this, the transgender community has shown immense determination to fight for their rights.

In terms of artistic expression, transgender experiences have found a strong voice. Cinema is an important source for showcasing transgender reality and overcoming stereotypes. Examples are *Tiresia* (2003), *Gulabi Aaina* (2003), *Common Gender* (2012), *Lipstick Under My Burkha* (2016), *A Fantastic Woman* (2017) and *Taali* (2023). These cinematic instances provide real-life glimpses into the lives of transgenders showcasing their tenacity and hardships. In the world of visual arts, from the temples of Khajuraho and Mughal carvings depicting homosexual sex to modern-day. Aravani Art Project aims to embrace people from LGBTQIA+ communities. Kalki Subramaniam, a transgender artist and activist who showcased her work (see figure 1) in the exhibition hosted by Sahodari Foundation (Tamil Nadu) provides support and counseling for Trans women.



Fig. 1 Trans Art, 2021

Well-known figures from the transgender community have come out as role models fighting for acceptance and recognition. Notable personalities are Laxmi Narayan Tripathi from India and Rozina Akter Ratna from Bangladesh. Transgender rights have gained massive attention across the world which has led to a wide range of initiatives in various countries such as Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2019 in India to necessitate access to healthcare services and the Gender Identity Law in 2012 in Argentina to allow individuals to legally change their gender identity. Gender confirmation surgeries and healthcare services for transgenders in Thailand and Bangladesh. Incorporation of transgender-friendly curricula in educational institutions in India and Scotland. Community support networks like India's 'Hijra community' and Bangladesh's 'Hijra Sangh' help in enhancing transgender stability. The emergence of India's Transgender Persons Awareness Week and Bangladesh's Hijra Pride Parade for the celebration of transgender identities carrying banners with messages such as 'Hijras are human beings too' and 'We deserve respect.' All these initiatives are a good sign of change and progress. However, hurdles still exist. Laws must protect rights, education must battle prejudices, healthcare must help, and workplaces must be equal if we want to have a better future for them. Society needs to take historical lessons to respect and embrace the diversity of transgender life.

Discussion

The implications of this research paper are perceptive about the under represented experiences of transgenders in the modern context. Through gender-fluid Tiresias, this study challenges traditional binary understandings of gender. The exploration of transgender representation from ancient mythology to late twentieth-century Queer Theory to modern context demonstrates the shift from marginalization to recognition and fosters active participation and more inclusion of them in various professions. However, the limitations of the study are twofold. Firstly, the concept of transgender identity did not exist during the time Eliot wrote *The Waste Land*. Therefore, it is important to interpret the text with caution recognising that Eliot might not had the intention to portray Tiresias as transgender. Secondly, historical works may have been written down with different perspectives which may not align with modern perspectives about transgenders. The research in the future should aim to take historical context with the author's intentions and impacts, analyze other transgender literary characters, and examine its impact on contemporary readers.

Conclusion

Through this research paper, we explored how Tiresias, a mere spectator in Eliot's poem, symbolizes a complex blend of genders. Tiresias' dual nature, 'old man' with 'wrinkled female breasts' symbolizes gender-fluidity. The portrayal of transgender in literature is not a new concept. Since time immemorial ancient tales of Shikhandi in the Hindu epic 'Mahabharata' to Greek mythology 'Tiresias' have resonated the essence of gender fluidity. Mythological and literary allusions encourage us to look into the timeless challenges faced by transgenders to embrace gender diversity. These transgender narratives paved the way for the emergence of Queer Theory in the late twentieth century. This theory expands the idea of gender fluidity. It has opened up avenues for expressing diverse gender identities contributing to the realistic representation of them in literature. Tiresias serves as the precursor to Queer Theory in reshaping gender identity and sexuality. This comprehensive study discusses transgender recognition drawing from literature, artistic expressions, and legal landmarks. Through all these expressions, this study glimpses into the authentic existence and shared struggles of transgender individuals.

Transgender individuals have come so far in fighting for themselves but still, there is a long way to go. In the future, it is likely that trans representation will continue to increase in various professions. In the education field, we wish to see transgenders as educators. In government institutions, we wish to see them holding positions of power and contributing to policy-making. In media and entertainment, we can expect to see more gender-diverse characters portrayed on screen with more authenticity. We hope for the empowerment of the transgender community to pursue their passions freely. It is where they will be able to live their authentic selves not defined by the expectations of others. The future belongs to them because transness is about living out new possibilities.

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Indulgence in Hollowness and Pursuit of Redemption An In-depth Study of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*

Mahbuba Nasrin

Abstract

T. S. Eliot's iconic poem, 'The Waste Land,' must have its enduring relevance after a century of its publication. It has stood the test of time as a profound exploration of the desolate human condition and the relentless pursuit of redemption. In the context of contemporary society's search for redemption amidst modern desolation, we hear the echo of T. S. Eliot. Eliot's pivotal work continues to captivate the attention of its wide range of readers with its haunting depiction of a fragmented and disillusioned world that is in severe need of peace and salvation.

This paper tries to shed light on the persistent relevance of 'The Waste Land' in a contemporary world marked by social fragmentation, ecological crises, spiritual drought, mental fatigue, and existential anxieties by exploring the themes of disillusionment, decay, and the desperate quest for redemption. This paper also seeks to venture into Eliot's vast masterpiece to know how it remains an inducing mirror to reflect our own social and personal struggles, disillusionment, identity crisis, and desolation.

Moreover, this study delves into the potential avenues of deliverance offered by Eliot's 'The Waste Land,' such as the exploration of spirituality, the power of collective memory, and the necessity of cultural renewal. At the end of the poem, T. S. Eliot comes to the conclusion that he must start the process of self-purification from himself. He decides to follow the three principles of spiritual rebirth; Datta, Dayatvam, and Damyata in his own life with the hope of salvation in an ever-changing world.

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Keywords

Desolation, Redemption, Disillusionment, Identity crisis

Introduction

T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, first published in 1922, is arguably considered to be the most influential poem of the whole twentieth century. It deals with the diseases of contemporary society and evils lurking at core of the modern civilization. Through a bleak depiction of city dwellers, Eliot unveils the distorted psychological state of a war-torn generation. The city dwellers have become disillusioned, perceiving their surroundings as barren and futile. Perversity in love and sexual relationships delves into the spiritual distemper of the modern wastelanders. In Personal life, devoid of hope and aspiration, they undergo the experience of loss of identity.

The crowds flowing over London Bridge remain victims of a machine-ridden civilization, the slaves of a deadening routine, divorced from the vitality of living tradition. They seem to represent the experience of death in life. Tiresias, the mouthpiece of the poem, draws varied figures of the past to bridge the harsh realities of contemporary society.

Presenting a vast tapestry of paradoxes and symbols, Eliot reveals his self-concern for social and spiritual remedy, inevitable for solace and rejuvenation of the modern world.

Objectives

- To investigate the themes of modern desolation, disillusionment, decay, and the desperate search for redemption portrayed in T. S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land*.
- To explore the ways in which *The Waste Land* reflects and critiques the socio-cultural climate of early 20th-century Europe and its continued relevance in contemporary times.
- To uncover the potential possibilities of redemption presented by Eliot in *The Waste Land*, including spirituality, collective memory, culture, and religion.
- To encourage readers to meditate on their own quests for meaning and redemption challenging modern desolation, depicted in *The Waste Land*.

Literature Review

In accordance with Qinyuan Zhang (2023) Eliot's *The Waste Land* is the most representative and Landmark poem. With the succor of many complex images, this long poem depicts a waste land that is full of psychic confusion, declining ideas and great material desires. According to Aishwarya Kumari (2022) T. S. Eliot, mainly a poet of war, portrays the waste land as no more than an earthquake that deconstructs the edifice of modernism. It then highlights the belief of Lord Buddha and Saint Augustine on the spiritual regeneration of the modern man, following aimless direction. P. S. Sri (2008) is of the view that through this poem Eliot reminds the reader of the annihilation of Jewish, Greek, and Egyptian Civilizations. It also apprises the Europeans, aggressively pursuing the same earmark. For salvation, Eliot was immensely influenced by Indian philosophy particularly Upanishadic perception. Navreet Sahi (2023) opines that the poem has been the focus of numerous scholars and critics. Eliot wrote the poem when he underwent a journey of mental fatigue, exhaustion, and depression. The fragments in the poem could be the result of his own fragmented self which he depicts in his work. The paper *Indulgence in Hollowness and Pursuit of Redemption: An In-depth Study of T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land* attempts to perceive the disillusionment of the post-war generation and look around for deliverance. Here lies the poem's relevance after a century.

Methodology

This study delves into the exploration of hollowness and the quest for redemption through a qualitative method. Utilizing 'The Waste Land' as the primary source, this paper draws upon a range of secondary data from published books, scholarly journals, and web pages. This paper is also enriched by employing the following methods:

In-depth Textual Analysis, Reading, and Re-reading Process

A very in-depth close textual analysis of *The Waste Land* to identify and examine key themes, literary techniques, historical allusions, and cultural references employed by Eliot. This re-reading process seeks to uncover the multi-layered meanings embedded within the text and correlate how they contribute to its relevance in modern times.

Synthesis and Conclusion

Synthesizing the findings from the literature review, and thorough textual analysis of T. S. Eliot's masterpiece, this paper seeks to draw meaningful conclusions about the relevance of *The Waste Land* after a century. The research paper endeavors to provide a comprehensive understanding of the poem's theme of modern desolation, the search for salvation, and their resonance in contemporary society, contributing to the existing scholarly discourse.

Alienation and Isolation in the Modern World

T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* is poignantly marked by the malady of modern wastelanders.

You gave me hyacinths first a year ago.
They called me the hyacinth girl.
Yet when we came back, late, from the hyacinth garden,
Your arms full and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing. (Lines 35-39)

In the very first section of 'The Burial of the Dead' of 'The Waste Land', a young beautiful lady recollects a time when someone sent her hyacinth flowers (Shmpoo, 2008), and that moment was assumed to be a pretty great time in her life. But a year later, with a heart, full of anguish, she understood that she failed to feel the warmth of that ecstatic love. She lost all her bliss and just went numb. She remained unable to establish communication and indulged in utter loss, feeling like a zombie. She felt out of breath neither living nor dead. In 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', confining himself within his own boundaries, Prufrock declares his complete isolation and says, 'I should have been a pair of ragged claws/ Scuttling across the floors of silent seas' (Line 73-74). As mentioned in Francis O' Gorman (2012), the hero of Charles Dickens 'David Copperfield' (1966), tells Agnes, 'I get so miserable and worried, and am so unsteady and irresolute'. Virginia Woolf in 'To the Lighthouse' (2004), explored the inner life of the worrier, Mr. Ramsay, a man restless about his reputation and individual attainment.

Loss of Traditional Values and Spiritual Emptiness

In the first part of the poem 'The Burial of the Dead' A Modern man, delineated by Eliot is physically alive to the need for idealistic regeneration, yet he does not seem to make any endeavour. He kept himself quite contentment with his own condition which may be called 'death-in-life.' In the first line of the poem *The Waste Land*, the poet describes the changing seasons. In contrast to the romantic poets, he portrays spring as cruel and disturbing.

April is the cruelest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain." (Lines 1-4)

Chaucer in 'The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales' refers to April 'with sweet showers' (Line 01). This is in sharp contrast with the opening line of 'The Waste Land'. While Chaucer regarded April as the season of rebirth and new life, urging men to spiritual salvation, Eliot harps on the negative spirit of spring as modern man is afraid of spiritual rebirth.

A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief. (Line: 22-23)

The mentioned lines stand for the loss of spirituality in a world of absurdity. The appearance of a German princess in this context provides a touching exponent of modern psychology. She recalls several excited memories of her childhood days and adulthood, spent in relaxation during the rain.

Deviation from Spiritual Faith

Theological deviation ushers irreparable havoc to the natural courses of life, obligatory for sustaining social solidity.

Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine. (Lines 65-68)

In the first section 'The Burial of the Dead' Eliot regrets that the London Crowd

comprises people, superficially generous but bereft of faith in spirituality. While the crowd proceeds towards King William Street, striking nine, the church clock alarmed the office goers. This was the time for the commencement of official duty and launching industrial activities, during the composing of the masterpiece *The Waste Land*. The death of Christ occurred in the ninth hour of the day. The reference is that when commercial life begins, Christ is no more. In the blatant modernity, the world of business is exclusively alienated from the spiritual world. Overindulgence in business is a denial of Christ and a complete negation of spiritual values. As mentioned in P. S. Sri (2008), being a spectator, Tiresias empathizes with fellow beings that are bound on the wheel like the character Lama in the novel 'Kim'. He is also sensitive to the sufferings of the dwellers of unreal cities of the world. He utters,

What is that sound high in the air
Murmur of maternal lamentation (Lines 367-68)

LeCarner & Thomas Micahel (2009) also say the Scheming Madame Sosostriis, who sees 'crowds of people walking round in a ring' (Line 56), offers an image of an ever-present riddle in a circular pattern, referring to 'the wheel'.

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. (Line 61-63)

The above-mentioned lines are references to Dante's *Inferno*, suggesting that Hell is made up of circles and the crowd is in limbo, in which the people are neither alive nor dead. In the third section 'The Fire Sermon' the demonstration of London as 'Unreal City' intensifies the insipidity and moral sterility of modern life. There is no sense of community life and it lacks the inevitable spiritual component of growth. Its setting apart, the procedure of life-leading and materialism turn London into a 'stagnant fen.' Eliot's use of 'Unreal City' reminds us of Wordsworth's noted sonnet 'London 1802' in which he criticizes the degeneration and impiety of the people of his time and seeks national survivors.

Breakdown of Communication and Sexual Perversion

The Second section of the poem 'A Game of Chess' is an expedient used by Middleton in the play entitled 'Women Beware Women' and this section begins with a detailed account of a woman's gorgeous drawing room including the furniture, light, sound, show-pieces as well as strange 'synthetic perfumes'. Preoccupations with minor objects and events mark the frustration and spiritual decay of modern life. Similarly, sex, too becomes a matter of anxiety and despair. This particular section deals with sex maneuvers and sex perversion.

'Lady of Situation', the fashionable society woman who is bored with her own life, undergoing severe psychic disorder. Her lover, too, suffers from the same sort of enfeeblement. He says,

I think we are in rat's alley
Where the dead men lost their bones (Lines 115-16)

Similarly, Lil, the wife of Albert, lost her interest in conjugal life. Going through the experience of abortion she lacks the physical vitality to gratify her husband, expecting more and more of a physical connection.

In the third section 'The fire sermon' Eliot gives another instance of mechanical corporeal attachment. The girl typist seems to be a human machine like a 'throbbing taxi'. Tiresias visualizes the scene in the girl's room as she waits for her lover. The sordid lover approaches but the girl is bored and tired. The girl has no emotional involvement. She is indifferent and takes the love game as she would take an antidote to get over tension or a headache. After the mechanical game the boyfriend departs, leaving her all alone. The lines below are manifestations of her ignoble love relationship.

She smooths her hair with an automatic hand,
And puts a record on the gramophone. (Lines 255-256)

In 'Portrait of a Lady', the line, 'Why we have not developed into friends' (Line 99), depicts an image of the illicit and unequal love relationship between an old woman and a young guy.

Neurotic Distortion of Commercially Modern Man

The title of section three 'The Fire Sermon' refers to the spiritual paralysis of the civilized man. Here fire suggests the universal flame of lust. The daughters of the Thames lament the loss of their chastity one after another. The first girl tells the story of her sex experience with a reveler on the floor of the boat. The second girl conveys a similar story. After the physical assault, the mind of the third girl awakened. She compares herself to 'broken fingernails of dirty hands' (Line 303), signifying the meaninglessness of the seduced girl's life. The story of the Thame's daughter reminds us of the mythical story of Philomela, in Ovid's metamorphosis. She was seduced by King Tereus, the husband of her sister Procne. The heart-rending lamentation of Philomela in the form of a nightingale acts as an instance of helplessness of the female folk of the society. The unreal city of London, burning in the fire of lust is compared to Carthage, a cauldron of sensuality by St. Augustine.

To Carthage then I came
Burning burning burning burning
O Lord Thou Pluckest me out
O Lord Thou Pluckest (Lines 307-310)

There is a rich merchant, Mr. Eugenides a representative of the commercial section and upper strata of society, full of lust and fond of perversity of sex. The actual 'Fire sermon' of the Buddha uses the symbol of fire to throw light on the destructive force of desire.

An Outgrowth of Post-war Generation

The aftermath of World War I witnessed a devastating impact on the generation leading to a profound change in social, economic, political, and cultural thinking. People migrate to cities, fundamentally in search of working opportunities. This migration collapses the deep-rooted class structure of the society. *The Waste Land* stands as a landmark in presenting the cultural shift in twentieth-century literature. It reveals the disillusionment caused by the First World War. It also highlights the cultural, and moral decay of cities, on account of the commercialization of life where everything is for sale. Even in the matter of love, there is a question of profit and loss.

In 'The Fire Sermon' the term 'O City city' stands for the important city of Europe. The towers of Alexandria, Vienna, and London are falling. In ancient-time the source of inspiration for life and achievement was faith. People really believed in religious values. Tradition increases the importance of moral conduct. Today the values have changed. There is a gulf between profession and practice. Hypocrisy is at its zenith. Flattery is considered more effective than merit. The ultimate consequence is that religious faith and compassion no longer exist in society. This has resulted in a general deterioration of the standard of life.

Quest for Salvation

Eliot's concern for salvation is evident in 'The Cocktail Party'. Here Edward and Lavinia, agree to remain as a couple and to work out their salvation in ordinary life. 'Ash Wednesday', expresses Eliot's repentance for his past sins and determination to pave the path towards spirituality.

The last and final section 'What the Thunder Said' contains the substance of Eliot's thought of salvation. Firstly he makes mention of the mythical journey of the knight to Chapel Perilous in the time of Fisher King. The second is the Biblical Journey of Christ's disciples to Emmaus when they were accompanied by Christ in disguise to illustrate how faith can lead to success. Ultimately Eliot draws an ancient Indian history when northern India suffered from a great juncture of drought and famine. The distressed people prayed to God for divine intervention. The god answered their prayer and uttered three words 'Da' 'Da' 'Da' from thunder, indicating the three-fold way of man's spiritual rebirth and salvation. The first 'Da' means Datta i.e. to give. It means to surrender to spiritual life or succumb to a higher purpose so that humanism can thrive. The second 'Da' Dayadhvam means to sympathize. It inspires an emotional bond of union between individuals or between the individual and society. The third 'Da' is Damyata, meaning self-control and discipline.

Shantih shantih shantih

In the concluding lines, Eliot strikes a personal note and wishes to find a remedy for the reform of a spiritually decadent society. With the repeated prediction of Sanskrit words from Upanishads suggesting peace and, eliminator of all odds, *The Waste Land* ends

with an image of possible redemption despite all its darkness and depravity.

Conclusion

In the light of the aforesaid deliberation, it must be clearly understood that *The Waste Land* a social document of the twentieth century, covers the history of mankind and scrutinizes the similarities between different epochs. The poem exhibits certain features, relevant for today's South Asian modern life. In Olden times in this sub-continent, there was the joint family system but today nuclear families emerge as an inevitable urgency. Certain loyal attitudes towards community and nation have been ebbed away from the society. Losing the intrinsic value of procreation, love has become a game of futility. The signs that resulted from the perversion and loss of war-torn Europe are still reiterated in different parts of the world. Such degeneration acts as a chain that links different periods, separated by regional distance and in point of time and sequence.

A person, fallen between cracks, must ask for direction. T. S. Eliot an unmediated witness of hollowness and sterility quests for direction. The spiritual wisdom and lesson, derived from ancient myth, Bible, Chaucer, Dante, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Hindu Scripture, Upanishad furnishes a clue to the survival of modern civilization. In fine, he offers a comprehensive solution to the problem of the modern age by combining the wisdom of the East and the West.

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