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ELIOT'S "THE WASTE LAND" : THE IMAGE OF MODERN MEN

ALI JAL HAIDER

M.A.(ENGLISH), UNIVERSITY OF PUNE



ABSTRACT

T.S. Eliot's *Waste Land* and how it portrays the post-war hopelessness of people, their meaningless relationships, spiritual barrenness and sexuality without emotion. Eliot was keen observer of European society and he is successful to provide a realistic picture of corrupted souls of European society.

POST- WAR EUROPE: THE REAL WASTE LAND:

The Waste Land is fundamentally a poem about Europe. The condition between the poem and the historical context of the modern era reveals that the poem metaphorically illustrates the actual condition of modern Europe; the barren and the lifeless wasteland is a metaphor of Europe after World War I. Eliot uses the this 'dialectic of analogies' to metaphorically depict the condition of post-war European society demonstrating the 'the disillusionment of a generation'. As Harold Bloom says " *The Waste Land* can be read as a testament to the disillusionment of generation, an exposition on the manifest despair and spiritual bankruptcy of the years after World War I" - a dead land of spiritual famine and drought. *The Waste Land* as a metaphor expressing the "cultural infirmity of Europe after the Great War as a sign of the post-war times". This argument for the metaphorical nature of the poem is valid; the text repeatedly refers to the decay of western civilization after World War I. The "Unreal City", London, after the war - "under the brown fog of a winter dawn/ A crowd flowing over London Bridge". He is disillusioned and confused at the scene; he "had not thought death had undone so many". This surreal and foggy image of London-its streets filled with "sighs, short, and infrequent," and "each man fixed his eyes before his feet"- accurately and poignantly demonstrates the despair and grim reality of modern Europe.

The image of London in the poem is characterized by guilt and shock. For example- "*Burial of the Dead*", the speaker observes and describes London after the great war as a broken, dry and lifeless place full of dead bodies. London, a city once characterized by progress and abundance, has become nothing more than an "Unreal City"; it has lost its cultural and social vitality and has been reduced to heap of fragments all idea of progress is reversed after World War I.

T.S.ELIOT COMMENTING ON EUROPE IN WASTE LAND:

Commenting on the condition of Europe, Eliot demonstrates that he is primarily interested in and concerned with the society around him. *The Waste Land* is a metaphorical poem that creates "a portrait of the mind of Europe". Eliot viewed the overall condition of Europe in terms of its mental condition; he examines the mindset and the ideology of people and crafted his poem into an introspective work that demonstrates the modernist philosophy. The crisis of Europe during the modern era was the breakdown of its mindset. Eliot creates a communication between the mind of poet and the mind of the society; what he communicates through the modern individual's perspective in the poem reflects how he perceives the condition of European

society as a whole. According , to Eliot's depiction in the poem, the mind of modern Europe can be characterized by distress, agony and restlessness. In *The Waste Land* various references to Europe and England reflects the deep contemplation of the condition of Europe. *The Waste Land* confused about the chaos within the society and concern for the nation in such a state co-exist and form a story of a broken society raped by war. Eliot laments the hopelessness and sorrow in modern Europe, Eliot doesn't leave his commentary on European society as a criticism or lamentation but instead attempts to provide, or suggest a solution for the predicament of Europe. Eliot believe that solution of this problem is to return to the European mindset before the modern era- to return the greatest and most developed form of European mind shown in the pre-modern philosophy and art.

THE MEANINGLESSNESS OF RELATIONSHIP IN WASTE LAND:

In *The Waste Land* relationship between people in the modern society are reduced to something that is dry and lifeless. The various characters in the poem are unable to carry a logical and coherent dialogue. As apart already fragmented whole, any attempt for conversations between people reflects the fragmented and incoherent structure and content of the poem. This impossibility of meaningful communication corresponds to the dismal and hopeless reality of modern society and also intensifies and dramatizes the speaker's anguish and frustration at the isolation and the loneliness in the modern world. For example, the speaker's attempt to have a conversation in the second part "*A Game of Chess*" demonstrates the impossibility of communication and thus relationship; "*Speak to Me. Why do you never speak. Speak./ What are you thinking of ? What thinking ? What ? / I never know what you are thinking. Think*". The speaker of these lines is unable to communicate with the person he is speaking to, this failure in communication reflects the isolation and lack of connection that characterize relationships within the disillusioned and dismal modern society through this depiction of relationship and communication, Eliot demonstrates that one of the social effects of the war is the lack of harmony and community and the ultimate isolation of the individual resulting from the sense of despair and meaninglessness in the midst of the desolation. In *A Game of Chess* relationships and love reduced to something that one seeks for self-centered pleasure. The discussion between Albert and his wife suggest a sense of lack of satisfaction; the characters live a hollow life with synthetic comforts and sex that substitutes for love. In a society in which relationships lack meaning and fulfillment, the modern individual becomes disillusioned at the lack of society and certainty that results from the failure of relationships.

CONCLUSION

Eliot's image of the modern world in *The Waste Land*, modern society is surrounded by obscurity, chaos, disillusionment, etc. In a world void of meaning and fulfillment, the modern man is in despair at the futility of life and relationships because of its accurate depiction of modernity through the seemingly absurd yet realistic and intentional design, *The Waste Land* remains the greatest metaphor for the mindset and condition of modern Europe.

I think *The Waste Land* is not only for Europe but for whole universe, it is a social document; the poem goes beyond Europe and deals with universal dilemma, its represents the spiritual emptiness of whole world after first Great War. Its also points out sexuality devoid of emotion and Eliot was quiet correct with his point of view.

The Waste Land is not a poem which stops at being a social document . Its framework of myth and allusive technique , its use of juxtaposition of modern and Elizabethan scenes , its presentation of characters and scenes of seduction and violation of women, the images of dryness and lake of water-all give the poem a universal and timeless significance.

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