

The problems of City life in Thomas Stearns Eliot's poetry

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Abstract:

An Anglo-American poet, critic, dramatist, and editor, Thomas Stearns Eliot was a major innovator in modern English poetry, famous above all for his revolutionary poetry. Eliot has in many of his poems, portrayed as hero that man who feels a sense of his own inadequacy and impotence, and who is painfully aware of the banality and futility of his own life as well as of life in general. In his poems, Eliot points out that the degeneration of modern civilization is caused by loss of faith in religion, lack of human relationship, commercialism of love, mental tension and politics and wars. This paper highlights on his view about the futility of the 20th century people in the cities. The alienation of the conscious individual among the unthinking masses is seen as responsible for the sordid loneliness of city life ,as is the break down of family relationships ,religion and morality. The poet calls the city London an unreal city because lust, cheating-go on freely. In this paper, I would also like to highlight the problems of city life in T.S.Eliot's poetry.

Introduction: Modernist writers like T.S.Eliot lived and wrote in the capital cities of Great Britain and Europe, using the city as a source of inspiration and research tool. The poetry of T.S. Eliot has a direct relationship to modern life. The agony, horror, spiritual sterility of modern life are represented which are so inevitable that any human being does not wish to deceive him with systematic lies. In his poetry he leaned towards a pessimistic sense of urban failure, and a feeling of mixed fascination and revulsion which are discernible in his writings. My aim is to reveal the personal disaster, loneliness, dejection, alienation and spiritual sterility that are experienced by everyone in this city which evolved problems while living in this city life. The Waste Land sees history as a spiritual epic. Therefore Eliot highlights the ugliness of the present in relation to the past. This is an important land-mark in the 20th century literature and it reveals the disillusionment caused by the First World War. It also shows dissatisfaction with the scientific achievement and industrial progress in Europe. Therefore it ushers new values of modern society. The epigraph to the poem suggests the death wish of modern European people. It also points to the theme of death and decay in the waste land. It is based on the story of the Cumae, a Sibyl who was the beloved of Apollo. She asked Apollo to grant her as many years as the grains of sand in her land but carelessly she forgot to ask for eternal youth. Hence she became old and finally shrank so small by her age that she was hung up in a bottle and could only say: 'I want to die. 'The sibyl links the medieval legend to classical myth. Her misfortune to be shut in a cage and to wither away indefinitely being preserved from death condemned like Tithonus. To grow old symbolizes the condition of the people of waste land. It also points to the theme of death and decay in The Waste Land. Furthermore it also suggests the death wish of modern European people. The poet sees the modern world as a waste land in which every experience is colored by the feelings of death in life. This poem is a social document. It throws light on the living condition of people belonging to different section of society in the modern world. It is a representative of the Aristocratic class in the German Princess of the section I. She is fond of travel. She is an example of a rootless modern person. She has no connection with her family, community and nation. She is a kind of International traveler, fond of the physical comforts of life. As she and her lover go through Munich, they face a shower of rain. As they do not realize the purifying power of rain rather they try to avoid it.

There is another roman representative of high society called 'the Lady of Situation'. Her drawing room is all with beauty, glamour and synthetic perfume. She is a neurotic, waiting for lover at night. Both these ladies are over sensual, over sensitive, and suffer from nervous breakdown. Among the males of the upper executives, having fun with the girls at the picnic spot near the Thames. There is the rich merchant; a representative of the commercial section of the society full of sensuousness. Eugenides is fond of perversity of sex. To the middle class society belongs Madame Sosostris, the fortune-teller who entertains people with all kinds of tricks. Among the lower classes is Lil whose husband has just returned from army and wants to have a good time. Albert went to war four years ago, giving her a lot of money for her dental treatment but she misused that money in sensuous enjoyment. But the pills have ruined her health. All these point to the inconstancy in the married life of the lower people. Then there is the typist girl who wants mechanical life and does not crave for love.

Finally, we have the song of three daughters of the river Thames who lost their chastity at the hands of several people. Eliot suggests that the same sense of sensuousness which dominated Queen Elizabeth I and Earl of Leicester is found among the poor classes on the banks of the river Thames.

In 'Portrait of a Lady', the Lady's attempt to form an intimate friendship with the person is met with confusion. Her attempt to communicate is hard, not as human language, but as discordant music:

The voice returns like the instant out-of-tune
Of a broken violin on an August afternoon;
'I am always sure that you understand
My feelings-----'. (Portrait, 56-59)

The failure of communication is one element in the fragmentation of communities that city encourages. The alienation of the conscious individual among the unthinking masses is seen as responsible for the sordid loneliness of city life, as is the break down of fine morality. In T.S. Eliot's early poetry, the city's failure to meet the needs of the inhabitants is attributed to the spiritual sickness of the western world. The background city-scenery of the poems continually reinforces this sense of social decay.

The "restless nights in one-light cheap hotels" (Prufrock, 1.6) suggests fruitless sexuality and prostitution, an image repeated in the character of the woman in *Prelude's* whose inner self has been corrupted by her unlovely life in the city slums:

The thousand sordid images
Of which your soul was constituted;
(Prelude, 26-28)

Eliot uses the techniques of 'disembodied body parts to emphasize the depersonalizing effect of city life. This technique, in *Prelude* suggests the monotony and lack of individuality that rented accommodation in a large city brings:

One thinks of all the hands
That are raising dingy shades
In a thousand furnished rooms:
(Preludes, 21-23)

Eliot comments, Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a character is the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Tiresias had the experience of life both as a man and as a woman. Tiresias belongs to the past and to the present. He is a link between the wasteland of king Oedipus caused by his incest and the waste land of modern civilization. He can comment on the modern waste land through his prophetic vision. The whole poem is dominated by the nightmare vision of the great modern city. Eliot used the words of *Inferno* to describe the city crowd that flowed up the hill and down the 'king William Street' because only it could define the depth of their desolation. Eliot's view of the post-war world, a land by means unfit for the heroes to live in. the title "Burial of the Dead" refers firstly to the burial of the dead fertility and secondly the burial service of the Christian church. In both burials, there is rebirth. The citizens of waste land do not like to be disturbed from the futile routine of the modern city life.

Hence the idea of spiritual regeneration is unattractive and painful to them. So the poem begins with the lines:

'April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land. '(The Waste Land,)

Chaucer's Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, April is the gayest month of nature and human- Life. It is a month of spiritual awareness when people flock together to perform a pilgrimage. But in the *Waste Land*, April is painful to the people of a dead land. This people like to be covered by forgetfulness of the soul or the snow in winter.

The theme of the *Wasteland* is death----- death by water is only one fact of it. The poem deals with two kinds of life and two kinds of death. Life which has become meaningless is equivalent to death whereas sacrificial death is as life giving as almost a means of securing the renewal of life. The *Waste Land* is concerned with this paradox. Another important theme is that it projects the superb trinity of culture, sex and religion. When these three working in isolation, cause the deplorable state of modern people in western civilization. The protagonist's speculation on life, life in death, decay and renewal, spring, water, memory and desire are all linked with an actual experience of a conversation in the *Hofgarten*. Thus memory is linked with the present and desires of the present. Drinking coffee and talking for an hour, relieves the protagonist and again he sinks back into his speculative and pessimistic mood. The German princess says, "I am not a Russian at all---a pure German from

Lithuania,” this points to the rootless –ness of European civilization. For this lady, summer and winter are mere seasons for bodily comfort or discomfort. That is why she goes with the arch-duke to the south in the winter. Her memories of childhood and her desire for physical comfort reveals her superficial state of living as well as the sterile life of boredom, laid by the inhabitants of the waste land.

It is the cruel month because it is the season of Easter when Christ was crucified. Awareness caused by April is painful because most people prefer oblivion and like a death-in-life existence. Tiresias looks at modern urban civilization and finds that it is wholly futile and dead. The stone, the trees, the sun, the broken idols represent the spiritual waste land. Only the Christian church (the red rock) can offer a shelter to humanity. The pillar which can save modern man is religion. He can be immortal if he follows the Christian way. Sex occupies a very important place in modern city life. It has become only an animal urge without any moral or social commitment. Eliot gives two examples of guilty love, which brings misery and death. In Wagner’s musical opera “Tristan and Isolde” there is the famous medieval story of guilty love. The sailor feels the wind blowing towards his homeland and thinks of his beloved. He is frustrated because he waits for his beloved’s arrival but there is no sign of Isolde’s ship and the affair ends in. Next there is a reference of the hyacinth girl who is a young beautiful lady of the present city.

A year ago they enjoyed profound love but the lover lost his senses. He did not have any mystical eyes that he could see into the heart of this lady. Love never gave satisfactions in the past nor will do so in the present or in the future.

So, Jay Martin says, “Eliot subsumed city life into poetry by concentrating upon its nightmarish, but also its marvelous, qualities; he saw it both as an illusion, deeply deceptive, and as a mirage, enticing and appalling. It provides phantoms of horror together with phantoms of delight; the prospects of the decay of man and the possibilities for his renewal. In short, the city----- which the socialist Frank Parsons called ‘the aggregation of all that is best in civilization and all that is worst in the remnants of barbarism.’”—was, as a symbol, a richly ambiguous repository of meaning. Eliot depicted both possibilities, simultaneously, and created the unreal city which could offer at once terror and delight.

Gambling is hurdle in the way of spiritual progress. In any big city people come across evil in different forms. Madame Sosostris, a society fortuneteller, is an evil character. She has pack of 78 cards by which she cheats people with wrong fortune-telling. Eliot calls London the unreal city because it has no vitality of substances. It is Eliot’s London, Baudelaire’s –Paris and Dante’s Limbo. Eliot is presenting a vision of contemporary life. Each individual exists in loneliness. The mass flows over the London Bridge. It is like the river flowing under the bridge. Crowds of people go over London Bridge at nine o’clock in the morning for work. When commerce begins Christianity goes out. London city resembles Limbo, an area in hell. Tiresias recognizes one man Stratson in the crowd of London as Dante does in the crowded inferno. Stratson was a figure in the world war as well as in the first Punic war (260 B.C.between Rome and Carthage). Tiresias asks Stratson whether the corpses he has planted in the garden, has bloomed. He further advises him to keep the dog away from the corpse. Otherwise there will be no chance of rebirth and the dog may reveal his sins. Similarly modern people do not try to remain in inaction and oblivion.

In the second section, there is a description of the drawing room of a fashionable lady.

In a modern city she is lie Belladonna, or Belinda or Cleopatra or Dido. The lady sat on a shining throne. The room is gorgeously decorated. She has used costly perfumes but she suffers from nervous breakdown. She refuses to pass her time with the lover. She says—

What shall we do tomorrow?

What shall we ever do? (The Waste Land, 134-135)

Tiresias describes the scene on the river Thames in the autumn season. The river is now deserted. There are only vestiges of summer parties, when rich businessman held picnics on the riverbanks. The pollution of the river stands for spiritual degeneration of the modern man and his civilization. As the protagonist stands on the riverbank, he hears the merry sounds of London crowds and the sounds of motor horns, calling girls to their lovers. Mr. Eugenides, a man of business and commerce comes to London is interested in enjoying sex-relationship in the hotel.

The poet calls London an unreal city because rape, lust and cheating go on freely. The unreal city of London is burning in the fire of lust. Lord Buddha and St. Augustine advised self-control and moral discipline to put out this lust. In the last section ‘What the thunder said’, the poet has found three remedies- Da, Da, Da, to give, to sacrifice, to control, to save the modern civilization from destruction. Sitting by the London Bridge, the poet feels that European civilization is collapsing “Reconstruction” must begin with the individual. Through self-purification, spiritual discipline and detachment from worldly possessions –these can give birth to spiritual rebirth. Some people may regard the poet as a mad man like Hieronimo. This spiritual madness is the only way of social re-construction and reform. Then rains of blessing like shanti, shanti, shanti will shower on the unreal

city with peace. Eliot's life in London is represented in his poetry, in graphic geographical detail. He is poet of London in *The Waste Land*, sensitive to the atmosphere of the place and is recording his impressions in realistic images. Thus R.G. Collingwood says. "The decay of our civilization, as depicted in "The Waste Land", is not an affair of violence and wrong-doing. It is not exhibited in the persecution of the virtuous and in the flourishing of the wicked like a green bay tree. The poem depicts a world where the wholesome flowing water of emotion, which alone fertilizes all human activity, has dried up. Passions that once ran so strongly as to threaten the defeat of prudence, the destruction of human individuality. We are imprisoned in ourselves, becalmed in a windless selfishness. The only emotion left us is fear: fear of emotion itself, fear of death by drowning in it, fear in a handful of dust. At the end of chapter I, he composes a photographic passage describing the daily in flux of the business crowd streaming into the city.

Eliot's lines echo in the readers mind as he moves with is rich in evocative detail:

A crowd flowing over London Bridge

Up the hill and down king William Street

To where St Mary Woolnoth keeps the hours. (*The Waste Land*, 60-64)

To fog of a winter dawn, however, is no longer 'brown', contemporary pollution being provided by carbon monoxide rather than low-grade coal-fires. The swarming scene and the umbrellas and briefcases of the black-clad hordes indeed make it necessary that each man (fix) his eyes before his feet. Now that the Saint Mary Woolnoth clock is repaired after many years, one may even experience 'phenomenon' of 'a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.' *The Fire Sermon*; now 'Under the brown fog of a winter noon.'

There is a reference to:

Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant

Unshaven with a pocket full of currents. (*The Waste Land*, 208-209)

After the episode, 'fore suffered' by Tiresias, between the typist and the 'small house agent's clerk', the quester hears:

Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,

The pleasant whining of a mandolin

And a clatter and a clatter from within

Where fish men lounge at noon: where the walls

Of Magnus Martyr hold

Inseparable splendor of Ionian white and gold. (*The Waste Land*, 260-265)

A few yards down Lower Thames Street is the site of the Billingsgate Fish Market and St. Magnus Martyr has been identified as the fish men's church, the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers even presenting wooden benches to the church courtyard in observance of the coronation of Elizabeth I. Many other geographic sites in the London area are mentioned in the 'The Fire Sermon'—The Thames, Greenwich reach, the Isle of Dogs, High bury, Richmond, Kew, Moorgate—providing a back drop for the 'quester's multiple voice, but one particular reference requires some explication, the title of the section itself. A few yards up, Fish Street Hill from St. Magnus Martyr is the monument commemorating the Great Fire of London, which much of the area in 1666, London Bridge, is 'felling down' along with other

'Falling towers

Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria

Vienna London

Unreal. (*The Waste Land*, 260-265)

The contemporary river that 'sweats oil and tar' is also the Thames of Spenser's "Prothalamion" and of the dalliance of Elizabeth and Leicester, as well as evocative of other celebrated waters. The 'fire' symbol evokes the London's Great Fire, built also Augustine's 'burning' and Buddha's 'Fire Sermon'. At the core of the poem is the Christian purification through rebirth by prayer and suffering.

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock is not really a love song though love is the underlying theme which records the indecision, hesitation and postponement of the proposal of the lover. It is a symbolic poem which gives the mood of the modern city-dweller. It expresses the barrenness, the mental tension, the frustration and the irresolution of the modern man. The first line of the poem is an invitation to the beloved to go out with him in the evening. The mental condition of Prufrock is symbolized by a patient who has been given a medicine to render him unconscious for the operation which is to follow. The patient is in a peculiar state of mind- he is conscious but conscious of nothing such is the condition of the mind of Prufrock. As Prufrock goes to the streets which seem to be numerous. The unending streets follow one another like the chain of a long argument. These streets follow a winding course like a tedious argument of concealed desire and ultimately lead one to an important question. The women come and go in the room talking of Michael Angelo without really understanding his art. So, Robert B. Kaplan says, "Prufrock lives in a world of fantasy and daydreams of which the monologue itself is a symptom. In this unreal world, he has allowed his ideal conceptions (of women, for

example, as indicated by the sea-girls) overshadow his real life. Thus he has neither rejected nor accepted love. Rather he has created a false notion of it which has prevented him from taking any kind of action. So he can not abandon the illusions of his fantasy world, and he can not accept the realities of the other world in which the women talk, quite probably foolishly, of Michaelangelo”.

In the poem ‘Portrait of a Lady’, the writer presents a genteel society, hollow from within but keeping up its appearances with confidence and self-consciousness. Here is also the problem of human isolation—the isolation of the individual from other people and from the world. The poet wishes to satirize his own milieu and urban society through the story of the old woman and the young man. The theme is the man-woman relationship and its failure as an elderly woman trying to exercise her charms on him for an illicit and unequal love—relationship. The scene pertains to a December afternoon in London with its smoke and fog.

‘Gerontion’ is a representative figure of the modern civilization. It is the story of an old man living in the low society. His house is rented, dingy and foul smelling. He calls it a decayed house. He is an old man, almost blind and a boy is reading a book for him. It is the dry season and he is anxiously waiting for rain. The dryness stands for his spiritual barrenness. Man in this mechanical civilization is like the cog in the wheel. The most important reason for this miserable plight is the loss of faith. People demand proof for whatever is mentioned in the Bible. The modern wants proof and reason for his faith. He does not believe in miracle: similarly his landlord, Jew, asks for a sign i.e. miracle. Rationalism of modern civilization cannot save civilization from decay. Rationalism and intellectualism are responsible for the loss of faith. Gerontion feels sorry for the decline in his faith-----

I that was near your heart was removed there from

To lose beauty in terror, terror in inquisition. (Gerontion, 55-56)

‘Sweeney among the Nightingales’ portrays the futile and barren mind of modern sexually degraded and uprooted urban person. Sweeney has an abnormally high animal spirit. He is fond of violence, extremely suspicious and secretive and given to mechanical sex. The poem starts as he is a visitor to the pub at the invitation of the owner of the pub. A plot has been hatched to murder Sweeney. The killing is to be done by a hired assassin.

He just escapes in the nick of time. He is representative of the dehumanized vagabond of modern society. Here it says—

The circles of the stormy moon
Side westward toward the River plate
Death and the Raven drift above

And Sweeney guards the horned gate. (Sweeney among the nightangle, 4-8)

Sweeney’s murder, however, has no such saving grace and regenerating power. His death will lead to no result. Finally, the poet compares the fruitless proposed murder of Sweeney with the murder of Agamemnon. While in the ancient world, murders led to rebirth, in the world of today, the murders are done just for fun and excitement. The moral corruption and utter violence and wastage of modern life are amply illustrated in this poem.

T.S. Eliot’s another poem The Hollow Men presents a picture of unmitigated horror of modern life. The hollow men live in a dead, spiritually barren and sterile land. Instead of worshipping Christ, they worship stone images. Spiritual truths are as far from them as a fading star. This is a sort of group-chorus where the hollow men lament their loss of activity, their vacuity and their emptiness.

They suffer from physical and spiritual paralysis:

Shape without form, shade without colour,

Paralyzed force, gesture without motion. (The hollow men, L11-12)

They are not like the notorious men of action, like Mistah Kurtz and Guy Fawkes. Of course those persons were violent and villainous, yet they were men of action. Those hollow men are leading a life like death-in-life.

Those who have crossed,

With direct eyes, to death’s other kingdom. (The Hollow men, L13-14)

They have purposeless lives. In this miserable condition, the hollow men assemble on the banks of the river in the underworld, waiting for Charon, the ferry man, to take them across to death’s other world. They are full of despair because they have no vision of faith in God. Faintly they have that just as the eyes of Beatrice, guided Dante to Paradise, in the same way, the eyes of Virgin Mary would appear to them and guide them to death’s other kingdom. The hollow men like the nursery children follow a life of routine and meaningless singing. Their intentions are good but performance is nil. As their spirit is weak, they postpone decision and commitment. This is a hurdle in their march onward; unless they replace doubt by faith, hesitation by commitment and pray positively for divine grace. They cannot even mumble the prayer for the Lord’s grace. They die with a sense of defeat by unable to die in peace. So, Grover Smith says, “Although ‘The Hollow Men’ with its ‘kingdoms’ exhibits a similar landscape, one cannot say precisely what the speaker has lost that he may not find again. He remembers weeping eyes, but he can not recapture the vision of sympathetic tears or hope to meet with other than derision when he meets those eyes after death”.

In 'Portrait of a Lady', the Lady's attempt to form an intimate friendship with the person is met with confusion. Her attempt to communicate is hard, not as human language, but as discordant music:

The voice returns like the instant out-of-tune

Of a broken violin on an August afternoon;

'I am always sure that you understand

My feelings-----.' (Portrait, 56-59)

For the Modernists, the failure of communication is one element in the fragmentation of communities that the city encourages. The alienation of the conscious individual among the unthinking masses is seen as responsible for the sordid loneliness of city life, as is the breakdown of family relationships, religion and morality.

In T.S. Eliot's early poetry, the city's failure to meet the needs of the inhabitants is attributed to the spiritual sickness of the western world. The background city-scenery of the poems continually reinforces this sense of social decay. The "restless nights in one-night cheap hotels" (Prufrock, 1.6) suggests fruitless sexuality and prostitution, an image repeated in the character of the woman in *Prelude's* whose inner self has been corrupted by her unlovely life in the city slums:

The thousand sordid images

Of which your soul was constituted; (*Preludes*, 26-28)

Eliot uses the techniques of 'disembodied body parts' to emphasize the depersonalizing effect of city life. This technique, in *Prelude* suggests the monotony and lack of individuality that rented accommodation in a large city brings:

One thinks of all the hands

That are raising dingy shades

In a thousand furnished rooms: (*Preludes*, 21-23)

In T.S. Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,' this paralysis is endemic to the city and its inhabitants. The poem opens with an image of inertia affecting the whole city:

When the evening is spread out against the sky

Like a patient etherized upon a sky table; (*Prufrock*, II, 2-3)

Prufrock, the persona of the poem, is paralyzed by his sense of inferiority, and reluctance to expose him to the ridicule of his city acquaintances. This becomes so strong that he is prevented from fulfilling his desire to communicate, even with those who are special to him.

In T.S. Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', Prufrock tries to escape from the monotony of city life into a surreal, fantasy world where he is free. The motif of escape by sea is repeated at the end of the poem, as Prufrock consoles himself for his failure to communicate by dreaming of friendly mermaids. This dream is also temporary, and the city soon reasserts itself in Prufrock's consciousness:

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea

By sea-girls wreathed with Seaweed Sea red and brown

Till human voices wake us and we drown. (*Prufrock*, 129-131)

The Modernist portrayal of the city is by no means all negative. They also experienced a fascination with city life that outweighed their disgust.

Their development of a city language enabled them to 'melt down and transform into strange and beautiful images,' The harsh realities of city life'. In T.S. Eliot's the Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, where the pollution that covers the city is described in sensual almost affectionate terms:

The yellow fog that rubs to back upon the window-panes,

The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes'

Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening

Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains.

(*Prufrock* 15-18)

City living fostered the formation of literary categories, which encouraged development of new styles of writing to meet modern needs. They leaned towards a pessimistic sense of urban failure, and a feeling of mixed fascination and revulsion is discernible in their writings. T.S. Eliot's early poetry, *Prufrock* and other observations deal with the negative aspects of the city, bringing the sense of unreality that pervades a world that has lost the rhythm of the seasons. The world has lost any sense of community, and most of all has lost a sense of purpose. In his poetry, Eliot avoids explicit statement of his purpose.

T.S. Eliot presented his theme in a collection of fragments. The fragmentation and reintegration is observable in his poetry. *The Waste Land* sees history as a spiritual epic. The theme of the decline and renewal of faith as its centre of relevance. His device is like collage. He takes non-symbolic elements from real life such as Mrs. Porter and her daughter, a character as Mary and the talk of two women in the game of chess. The effect of double image is achieved through ambiguous symbols, allusions and quotation. Through the device of contrast, Eliot highlights the ugliness of the present in relation to the past. He makes juxtaposition of the love of Queen

Elizabeth and the Earl of Leichester with the love affair between the typist girl and the male-clerk. He makes use of objective correlative. An objective co-relative is a set of objects and chain of events which evoke a certain emotion in the mind of the poet. For example, *The Waste Land* reminds the poet of the mythical waste land of the past. Eliot uses a new type of symbols to reveal the complexity of modern city life. In 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', he uses the image of an etherized body upon the table where he is lying conscious but conscious of nothing. He uses certain symbols in opposite senses. Fire stands for destruction and also purification. Water stands for death as well as rebirth.

Eliot made use of metaphysical conceits. In 'the Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock;' the fog is compared to a coat. In 'Ash Wednesday', three leopards are compared to the lady in white, the winding stair etc. The images are quite precious and accurate. He conveys the meaning through incantatory imagery, which "evokes the unspoken mood" behind the words. The tediousness of social life in the city and its effects on the persona in "The Love Song of J. Alfred prufrock" are implied using this method:

Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
(Prufrock, 50-51)

The Modernist concern with language and meaning includes the notion that, in the city, real communication is impossible, due to the isolating effects of city life. T.S Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' and 'Portrait of a Lady' both deal with this inability to communicate. Prufrock, haunted by monotony, attempts to ask "an over-whelming question" (Prufrock 1.10). His own self-doubt eventually prevents him from even making the effort;

Would it have been worth while?

If one, set tingling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
And turning toward the window, should say:

'That's not at all.

That is not what I meant, at all'

(Prufrock, 94-98)

Conclusion: Eliot's world is the western world as he saw after the First World War. The Waste is not that of war's devastation and blood-shed, but the emotional and spiritual sterility of Western man, 'the Waste' of our civilization... Eliot does not regard this as a single moment in history, particularly to the waste of 20th century. The poem "The Waste Land" presents 20th century belief and disbelief, of culture and of life are kept in a continuous and critical relationship with those of the past. The theme of the poem is the salvation of the 'Waste Land'. Eliot develops this theme on patterns in nature, myth and religion, the cycle of the seasons, the ancient fertility myths of Egypt, India and Greece, in which the god must die to be reborn to bring fertility to the soil and potency to the people. This resembles the life, death and resurrection of Christ. Eliot made use of the myth of the Fisher King who is impotent by illness, old age and his people are also infertile. This curse can be lifted by a stranger who must answer certain ritual questions.

He also made use of the grail legends. The grail is the cup used by Christ as the Last supper. It was regarded as supremely holy Christian relic. It was lost and the search for the grail became an image for man's search for spiritual truth. The searcher of the grail is a knight who must put certain questions about the grail. When this is done, the plight of the people is eased. In the Waste Land the exercise of Datta, Dayadham and Damyata can bring santi in the world. The poetry of T.S. Eliot has direct relationship to modern life. The width and the height and the depth of modern life are exhibited in his poetry; the agony and the depth of modern life are represented as evitable to any human being who does not wish to deceive himself with systematic lies. In "The Hollow Men", the hollow men are incapable of making constancy in love because there is a shadow which falls between the desire and the spasm. The kinship of love and belief is affirmed when the difficulty of religion and of religious belief are expressed in the same way and as parallels, by means of a paraphrase and parody of the Lord's prayer. The old man who is the protagonist of "Geornition" must refer to human-beings of many nationalities, to Mr. Silvero at Limoges, Hakagawa, Madame de Tornquist, and Christ (the tiger), and he finds it necessary to speak of all history as well as his failure in love. In modern life, human beings are whirled beyond the circuit of the constellations: their intimate plight is seen connection or relation with the anguish of the Apostles after Cavalry, the murder of Agamemnon, the insanity of Ophelia, and children who chant that London Bridge is falling down. Eliot has been considered a classicist because of his critical intellect. He himself stated that he is classicist in literature and Anglo-Catholic in religion and a royalist in politics.

He is classicist with strong elements of Romanticism in Tradition and Individual Talents. "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality but an escape from personality. He aims at negative capability by not expressing personal emotion and personal sensibility. Classical poetry is complete, mature and orderly. But romantic poetry is subjective, immature and chaotic. In spite of using variety of techniques, Eliot is classicist of modern English Literature. Eliot's London topography thus

becomes topography of the inner eye as it is re-created in his imagination. Eliot saw England-London, tradition- in a distinctly Eliotian-American way. In which contemporary existence is a kind of parenthesis in past that is not a memory but a force that is as living as the present. In Eliot's poetry, the reader shares a city that is richer and stranger for this transformation.

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