

The waste land: Neither damyata nor co co ri co

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Abstract

T.S. Eliot the physician of modern age, giant for moral criminals has shown in his multifaceted poem 'The Waste Land' that past was morally rich but in present immorality has become a status. Ours is the society that feels to be honoured in tearing the faith and morality into pieces. Young girls feel relaxed on being openly raped – where is the modern morality? Maybe, it is in being raped. In ancient time the old were respected but now the same are involved in leching or ogling activities then who is respected and for what? Now, who can cherish renunciation or “shantih” in this modern waste land?

Keywords: regeneration, amelioration, sex bomb, shantih, mythical, crucifixion, sexcapade, cosmos, peccadilloes

Introduction

T.S. Eliot the physician of modern age, giant for moral criminals, critic of life and culture, made a complex, erudite, cryptic, satiric, spiritually earnest, and occasionally lyrical poem, viz “The Waste Land” published in 1922 in the *Criterion*. “The Waste Land” is a slap in the face for the tradition-fuckers. “The Waste Land” with its occasional emphasis on the forlorn and frustrated lives of some parties of the modern society—Madam Sosostriis and the young man carbuncular, Lil and Albert and the typist home at teatime—gives the reader a sort of police report about their world where people suffer from and with each other over their modest peccadilloes. The theme of the poem encompasses simultaneously several levels of experience arising out of various waste lands: The waste land of religion in which there are rocks but no water; the waste land of the spirit from which all moral and spiritual springs have evaporated; and the waste land of the instinct for fertility where sex has become merely a mechanical means of animal satisfaction rather than a potent, life giving source of regeneration. The poem has been rapidly acclaimed as a statement of the post-war sense of depression and futility. The first epigraph on “The Waste Land” that is “The horror! The horror!” that is taken from J. Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* reveals the true horror of multifarious organized crime. The present epigraph “I want to die” that is taken from *Satyricon* by Petronius suggests that who can wish to live in this vicious and depraved social condition? To A G George the poem is “the mood of weariness and disillusionment of post-war Europe.” (George, 1969:01) ^[3] It is seriously praised by Peter McDonald for showing “A perfect emotive description of a state of mind which is probably inevitable for a while to all meditative people.” (McDonald, 2007:103) ^[4] To Russell Elliott Murphy “The Waste Land” is an attacking on “those who listen to the ‘Inner Voice’ of romanticism and moral disorder.” (Murphy, 2007: 237) ^[5]

Sexual perversion

“The Waste Land” is but sexually rich in its theme and the motif is amelioration. For amelioration the poet quotes from the past

myths and literature casting the satiric light on the present similar happenings. Sex is an important aspect of human life but it is guilty outside the married life. Today sex has been perverted from its proper function and is utilized for animal pleasure and momentary satisfaction. The “Waste Land” is made so by sexual and voluptuous persons. In the first part of the poem the poet cites the example of German “arch-duke” and his cousin, Marie, the “hyacinth girl”. In the second section the fashionable lady is no more but a sex bomb entangled in sexcapade. Then there is along sexual talk between Lil and her lady friend, which tears the entire mortal’s morality into pieces. The poet cites the example of nightingale –the symbol of suffer – that after being raped Philomel was changed into a nightingale but where do the modern sex bombs stand? The example shows that past was morally rich but in present immorality has become a status. In the third section that is based on Buddha’s sermon against lust the poet talks about “the loitering heirs of city directors”, Sweeney Mrs Porter, homo-sexual relationship of Mr Eugenides, then there is a full detail of sexual intercourse of the typist girl and her ‘carbuncular’ lover. Queen Elizabeth-I proves no less than these examples, she is also shown in love with Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester. The poet gives the example of Actaeon who saw Diana bathing naked in a lake and was changed into a stag due to her curse and devoured by his own setters. Again, Goldsmith’s Oliva wanted to die after being raped, but what is the condition and desire of our modern society’s so called Olivas, whose bodies can be seen “naked on the low damp ground”, whose lust ridden hearts can beat like “a taxi throbbing”, whose hearts get relaxed by the sound only “jug, jug” and after sexual intercourse she only “smoothes her hair” or “puts a record on the gramophone” or can’t but say “well now that is done, and I’m glad it’s over.” Thus the “Waste Land” is an emblem of sexual crime that seems to have become the standard of our modern morally marred society that is why the poem is called “the vision of desolation and spiritual drought.” (Bradbrook, 1965:16) ^[1] I A Richards takes it “the plight of the whole generation” (Richards, 2001: 278) ^[6] and to Cleanth Brooks the poem seems to be a sigh for the long lost glory of the past.

Loss of faith and morality

The ancient society was spiritually rich, but the modern society feels to be honoured in tearing the faith and morality into pieces. From the very beginning of the poem ie “April is the cruellest month” to the last of the poem the poet seems to shed tears not due to any suffering of his own but for the sordid plight of the spiritual devoid hollow men or waste-landers. Madam Sosostris does not contain the card of “the hanged man” that shows the negation of spiritual values. The poet comments that “your shadow at evening rising to meet you” shows the self-interested human life. The “corpse” that was “planted last year” in the garden of hearts has dried up with its very roots ie the faith of waste-landers has shattered and they are but –

“I think we are in rats’ alley
Where the dead men lost their bones.”

Now the holy water of the Father Thames is polluted by many a modern society’s dirt. The very water that had been a means of purification as mentioned by Shakespeare in the *Tempest* – “those are pearls that were his eyes” has now become a source of pollution – “the river sweats oil and tar.” The physical pollution has led to the moral pollution of the daughters of the Thames – young girls feel relaxed on being openly raped – where is the modern morality? Maybe, it is in being raped.

“Exploring hands encounter no defence;
His vanity requires no response,
And make a welcome of indifference.”

The Philomela, and Oliva, of our modern society dry their combinations ie “stockings, slippers, camisoles and stays” by spreading outside the windows only because their hearts are “burning burning burning burning” with the fire of lust, and they want a costumer to subdue their desires. Is this a faith of theirs towards God, society, father, brother and husband? We are ready to adopt what a fucking culture. Christ who lived even after crucifixion but now the waste-landers have killed Him by neglecting resultant the waste-landers are living a life similar to death-in-life.

“He who was living is now dead
We who were living are now
Dying”
And resultant
“London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down”

Thus the poem seems a type of living death of the modern waste-landers. Who can cherish renunciation or “shantih” in this modern waste land?

Shattered human relationship

Now men do but shatter the human relationship. We respect to neither the blood relations nor social relations nor morality nor spirituality only because the fire of selfishness and lust has burnt the mortal’s morality to ashes. A cousin as “the arch duke” journeys with a nice as “Marie” only to set up sexual relations. No longer does that golden age appear now when true love alike that of Meera and Krishana survived for thousands of years. But the lovers of modern society are only voluptuous ones like “hyacinth girl” and her “carbuncular” lover who love and meet only for sex. The modern society is thronged with such friends as Lil and her lady friend that one being smitten wants to coax and entangle to the husband of others. By dragging Lil and Albert, Tereus and Procne, and Antony and

Cleopatra, hyacinth girl and her carbuncular lover into the endless tale of human betrayal, disappointment and sexual crime in the name of love, Eliot is not telling their own tale; he is telling everyone’s tale to one degree or another. In ancient time the olds were respected but now the same are involved in leching or ogling activities then who is respected and for what? “The Waste Land” is a valid assessment of the absolute decline of the modern Western world; it is a picture of the breaking down of the very structures on which life has modeled itself. There involves no belief in any sort of order—either moral or aesthetic. It is a wounding stormy sea of sex. That is the why the protagonist Tiresias laments-

“...so many
I had not thought death had undone so many.”

Commercialization of life

Now man has become commercial in hand, head and mind and moral values are against the past. The wheel of fortune is revolving in opposite direction. In the modern society there is only “one eyed merchant” whose other eye, viz of spirituality appears to be removed from its very existence. Modern men evaluate everything in the terms of money, even the holy hour, ie “of nine” makes us bored, and due to commercial activities at that. For the most of the denizens of “The Waste Land” there is only that sense of frustration and futility.

“To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the
hour With a dead sound on the final stroke
of nine.”

Mr Eugenide and “the loitering heirs of city directors” are the examples of the modern businessmen who can buy any comfort and pleasure including sex and other things by the power of their money. Moreover, the faith of materialism seems conquered over the faith of God, not vaguely but clearly because there was a proposal for the demolition of the church, viz “Magnus Martyr” for building a hotel.

“Of Magnus Martyr hold
Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold”

Eliot tells that the men of the present society are like Coriolanus and are entrapped in the prison of selfishness. Each one is imprisoned in his own self. He has lost the “key” of human sympathy and brotherhood.

“We think of the key, each in his prison
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison”

Thus, Eliot has presented a very clear picture of spiritual chaos of post-war European society. To show this upheaval more affectively, and in the ardour for amelioration, he brings about relationship between the past and the present through the usage of the mythical method and practice of his own theory “objective correlative”. “The Waste Land” is an indisputably serious poem that many contemporary readers took to be a poetic parody. “The Waste Land” is the hallmark of Eliot’s style. Virtually from the time of the publication of “The Waste Land” in 1922, Eliot’s creative energies had been seriously flagging. Finding riches in the debris of the past, the poet does well against the cosmos chaos by means of “the Police in different voices.” Thus “The Waste Land” is an endless tale of human betrayal, disappointment and sexual crime, where one can feel neither “Damyata” nor “co co ri co.”

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