

**Ministry of Higher Education
and Scientific Research
University of Al-Qadisiyah
College of Education
Department of English**

Nationalism in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*

Submitted By

Ali Arkan

Mustafa Ali

Supervised By

Lect. Ali Abdul Jalil

Dedication

To our prophet Muhammad (peace and prayer upon him)

Acknowledgements

We thank God for his help. Our gratitude to our supervisor Lect. Ali Abdul Jalil For his advice and support.

Also our thanks to our friends for their encouragement.

Contents

Dedication

ii

Acknowledgements

iii

Contents

iv

Abstract

v

Chapter One

1.1 T. S. Eliot's Life and Career 1

1.2 Nationalism in Literature 4

Notes 7

Chapter Two

Nationalism in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* 8

Notes 16

Conclusion 18

Bibliography 20

Abstract

The Waste Land, because of its great critical reputation, not because of any inherent worth it might have, it is one of the curiosities of English literature. Each of the five sections of *The Waste Land* introduces a journey undertaken by the inhabitants, generally a journey of no spiritual import, part of a social routine. *The Waste Land* has become such an assured part of the twentieth-century consciousness, one of the major vehicles for its sensibility, that we easily forget the transformation it worked. Realizing some of the possibilities latent in 'Gerontion,' it in effect at once proposed and confirmed a new basic style so powerful that the older basic style, charged deeply with egocentrism, would no longer be viable unless it met the challenge Eliot.

This paper consists of two chapters. Chapter one sheds light on with T. S. Eliot's life and career , also it discusses nationalism in literature. Chapter two analysis nationalism in T. S. Eliot *The Waste Land*

Finally the conclusion sums up the findings of the study.

Chapter One

1.1 T. S. Eliot's Life and Career

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born into a distinguished family with roots in Boston and the New England of the early pilgrims. He was born on September 26, 1888 in St. Louis, Missouri on the banks of the Mississippi River. When Eliot was seven he began his formal education; he attended a small elementary school, and then, in autumn 1898, entering Smith Academy in order to prepare for university study. In St. Louis Smith was considered an educational stepping stone to the best universities¹.

Eliot has been interested in reading since his youth and has become a model for the ideal student. In 1905, on completing the course of studies at Smith, Eliot was prepared for Harvard University and to prepare for this he was recorded at private school near Boston called Milton Academy, which sent many young men to Harvard. This was his first experience of being away from home for an extended period. He completed his year at Milton without any impediments and headed for Harvard in 1906.²

He particularized in this new environment and would stay there until 1914, following a masters degree and doctorate. His literary activities and intellectual set him away again, but this time in ways that were more productive. Harvard, at this time, along with other Ivy League schools, was filled with the sons of rich and powerful families and Eliot found himself in the company of many young men

whose attentions and life choices were little intellectual or literary.³

When World War I (1914–1918) broke out, he transferred to Merton College, Oxford. It was in London that Eliot came under the influence of his contemporary Ezra Pound, who recognized his poetic genius at once, and assisted in the publication of his work in a number of magazines, most notably *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* in 1915. His first book of poems, *Prufrock and Other Observations*, was published in 1917, and immediately selected As a pioneer poet . With the publication of *The Waste Land* in 1922, now considered by many to be the single most influential poetic work of the twentieth century, Eliot's fame began to grow to nearly mythic proportions; by 1930, and for the next thirty years he was the most controlling figure in poetry and literary criticism in the English-speaking world.⁴

As a poet, he transmuted his relationship for the English metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century and the nineteenth century French symbolist poets like Baudelaire and Laforgue into revolutionary restoration in poetic technique and subject matter. Eliot's poems in many respects articulated the disillusionment of a younger post–World War I generation with the values and conventions both literary and social of the Victorian era. As a critic he had a large effect on modern literary sense which showing views that after his conversion to orthodox Christianity in the late thirties, were based in social and religious conservatism.⁵

Eliot's later poetry collections include *Ash Wednesday* (1930) and *Four Quartets* (1943); his books of literary and social criticism include *The Sacred Wood* (1920), *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933), *After Strange Gods* (1934), and *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1940). As a

playwright, he wrote verse dramas include *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), *The Family Reunion* (1939), and *The Cocktail Party* (1940). *The Confidential Clerk* (1954) and *The Elder Statesman*⁶ (1959)

Eliot was to accompany four careers: editor, dramatist, literary critic, and philosophical poet. He was the most thorough poet of his time in the English language. His undergraduate poems were “literary” and conventional. Eliot’s career as editor was auxiliary to his main interests, but his quarterly review, *The Criterion* (1922–39), was the most notable international critical journal of the period. From the early 1920s until his death and as such was a generous and supporter of young poets.⁷

He received the Nobel Prize and the British Order of Merit in 1948, and the list of his honors persistent to grow. After the *Four Quartets*, he committed himself to the poetic drama with *On Poetry and Poets* (1957), and the editing of collections of his poetry and plays. In 1948 his first wife died and in 1957 Eliot married Valerie Fischer who was his private secretary, and remained married until his death in London on January 4, 1965.⁸

1.2 Nationalism in Literature

National literatures are a supposition of modern cultural landscapes. In countries around the world schoolchildren in state-mandated courses read the "Great Works" of their nation. Universities offer literature courses in a smorgasbord of national units: course catalogues list classes such as "Russian Masterpieces," "The Brazilian Novel," and "Major American Authors." The style, themes, and narratives of each nation's literary canon, the pantheon of most valorized and legitimated texts, are analyzed and debated both in the scholarly literature and in more general social commentaries⁹.

National literatures have traditionally been understood as reflections of the unique character and experiences of the nation. That is, it is felt that the unique experience of national life generates a national, collective consciousness, or in some formulations a "collective unconscious" marked by a distinctive set of values, tensions, myths, and psychological foci, that produces in turn a certain readily identifiable national character - the American cowboy or the French sophisticate, for example. This character, and the values, tensions, and myths from which it springs, is then discernible in indigenous cultural products. Thus the distinctiveness of a national literature is seen as the *natural embodiment* of the distinctive national character¹⁰.

Freedom Struggle brought into focus the notion of nationalism and one can deal with the subject 'Nationalism and Literature' very easily by describing patriotic writings as an expression of nationalist fervour of the people against a foreign domination which began to emerge in the nineteenth century particularly in every Indian language¹¹.

Nationalism is produced by tapping the most private attachment to ground for the purposes of the most public statecraft. It is predicated on reproductive heteronormativity: birthright. To "naturalize" is to legalize a simulacrum of displaced birth, which becomes an actual birthright for the next generation¹².

Literature and nationalism were inextricably intertwined during the 18th century in Britain. There was the shift from Enlightenment cosmopolitanism to the Romantic preoccupation with localism and patriotism which marks the beginning of nationalism in literature. The growth of nationalism in literature was mostly due to the rise of a literate population, the bourgeoisie, which paved the way for a rise in demand for vernacular language usage and vernacular cultural texts¹³.

Walt Whitman and Washington Irving contributed to the formation of American literature through the very use of language. This language, then, served as a positive influence in placing America on its own literary map. Irving, for example, was one of the most popular and leading names who believed that we should model a new American identity in fiction. Later, of course, others followed his notion, i.e., the form of satire. Whitman is commonly accepted to be the first indisputable American poet. His use of free verse, different from European traditions, was used to symbolize America in its expansion, in its freedom, and its refusal to be confined to rank, custom, power structures, etc.¹⁴

The Literature of Nationalism concerns literature in its broadest sense and the manner in which, in belles lettres, the oral tradition and journalism, language and literature create national/nationalist myths. It treats East European culture from Finland to 'Yugoslavia', from Bohemia to Romania, from the nineteenth century to today. Both Irving and Whitman, in their own rights, contributed towards the

making of literature which was essentially part of a historical movement overall in America in regard to literature nationalism.¹⁵

American literature has not continued to grow disproportionately national, disproportionately concerned with scenes and situations exclusively local and American. This tendency is evident in the work of such writers as Whitman, Howells, and Garland, not to mention contemporaries such as Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, and Sinclair Lewis; this tendency is encouraged, and its extension urged and prophesied, by such critics as John Macy, Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Lewis Mumford, Vernon Parrington, and Fred Lewis Pattee.¹⁶

Notes

¹ Hugh Kenner, *The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot* (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1959),p.3.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid,p.5.

⁴ Herbert Howarth, *Notes on Some Figures behind T. S. Eliot* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964),p.21.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ John Xiros Cooper ‘*The Cambridge Introduction to T. S. Eliot*)Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,2006‘(p.2

⁷ Ibid,p.3.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Sarah M. Corse‘ *Nationalism and literature The politics of culture in Canada and the United States*) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1997‘(p.13

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Buckingham: Open University Press,1997),p.17

¹² Ibid.

¹³ John Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press,1982),p.61.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ John D. Kerkering ‘*The Poetics of National and Racial Identity in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*)Cambridge:Cambridge University Press,2003‘(p.7.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Chapter Two

Nationalism in T. S. Eliot *The Waste Land*

The Waste Land is a long poem by T. S. Eliot, widely regarded as one of the most important poems of the 20th century and a central work of modernist poetry. Published in 1922, the 434-line *The Waste Land* was the longest, most intelligent, most complex, and most ambitious poem that T.S. Eliot ever wrote. *The Waste Land* is a uniquely difficult poem. It is rife with allusions to such an extent that it remains largely incomprehensible to most casual readers. The reader would have to be fluent in seven languages just to understand the literal meaning of every word.¹

Yet linguistic barriers make up just the surface layer of the poem's difficulty. Armed with editorial notes, every reader has the capacity to understand the occasional Sanskrit phrase or source the reference to obscure sixteenth-century drama. Understanding what those references mean in the context of the other lines of poetry around them is more difficult and likewise more important.²

Eliot's poetic style employs two methods of expressing emotion, both difficult for the reader to appreciate. The first method is to bombard the reader with images and sounds abruptly, irregularly, and discordantly. Eliot uses this technique in theatrical scenes, quoting bits of conversation that come at the reader out of context and unexpectedly. The second method is to rely not on the literal sense of language but on the tone and rhythmical power of words. Everything in the poem has meaning but recognizing the tone of the verse, and how and when it changes, is

essential to appreciate the emotions of the narrator and his attitude toward certain subjects .³

When Eliot references the Grail legend in *The Waste Land*, he has its deeper meanings in mind. He uses the Grail theme primarily as a metaphor for the current situation of two things: his private soul and European society. Eliot's title immediately evokes a situation of infertility, failure, and barrenness. On one level, *The Waste Land* is post-war Europe. *The Waste Land* in the medieval legend was also symbolically related to the Fisher King's impotence; so in Eliot's poem, one of *The Waste Land* is his own loveless marriage. Finally, *The Waste Land* is the narrator's private soul, as it looks for philosophical or religious answers to life's deepest questions, and struggles to fill a deeper spiritual vacuum .⁴

The modern man had become too hardened to accept Christian principles directly and, instead, must gradually be made aware of his condition. In order to achieve this, Eliot chronicled his journey of realization and revelation in the form of *The Waste Land*, using the protagonist of the poem to represent his own passage to spiritual awareness and to convince man of the degradation of society and the need for reform. The poem begins with the protagonist musing on spring.⁵

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. (1, 1-7)⁶

This passage is an indication of the extent of the degradation of man. He has sunken so low into depravity that he prefers to live a life of ignorance and to disregard the fact that he is living a half-life. April, the month in which spring begins, is no longer a joyous time in which new life is celebrated, but a cruel time of rebirth that reminds man that his own life is terribly empty .⁷

The Waste Land is explicit in identifying the tradition from which it arises. The author provides a “Notes” section at the end in which he cites his own references. For example, as the “Notes” that follow the poem state, in line twenty “Son of man,” is a reference to Ezekiel II, I (ln 20). By using the Bible as the first textual reference of the poem Eliot grounds his poem firmly in western Christian tradition. The author is explicit as to what tradition he wishes to invoke, and makes the reader’s understanding of that fact unavoidable by citing it directly. In fact, the poet’s inclusion of the “Notes” section implies that he hopes to limit the ways in which *The Waste Land* can be interpreted. The poem remains continually anchored to Eliot’s conception of “Tradition” through his use of other literary references .⁸

The Waste Land reveals concerns about the changing world in the 1920s. Eliot wrote from a very specific perspective, focused on the literary and cultural traditions of Western Europe. The political changes in Europe and America pose a threat to the “Tradition” that Eliot is so invested in. And though Eliot’s poem is certainly political as it reflects his feelings on the consequences of the Great War, it does not participate in political debates of the era. It instead focuses on the maintenance of “Tradition,” supporting its survival at whatever cost. He utilizes these three issues to discuss his concern about the decline of what he saw as a worthy tradition in European history, from the Bible through the era in which he wrote. His use of citation, historical and literary references embed his own work

into the very tradition that he is trying to defend .⁹

Eliot uses the Grail theme in juxtapositions with modernity, to illustrate how modern social changes departed from humanity's oldest spiritual insights. In modern times, sex is not life-giving or in any way related to the themes of fertility and regeneration associated with the ancient fertility cults and vegetation ceremonies. Modern people regard childbirth as an unfortunate side-effect of intercourse, to be treated scientifically or to be avoided by means of pills. The obligation to engage in intercourse threatens women's lives, as seen in line 160 how the woman "almost died of young George" because she "had five already."¹⁰

In lines 138-172, Eliot cited his maid as an example of the type of modern behavior he finds most troubling. In this section the narrator shows disgust toward some popular attitudes on marriage and sexuality. The scene takes place at closing time in a pub, as the repeated interruption of "Hurry up please it's time" indicates. Sex is not sacred, but the topic of drunken banter. Almost all of the references to sexuality in the poem tie into the Grail theme. It is not worth highlighting every one here, but in general the instances of modern sexuality are all at odds with the treatment given to it by both the Grail legend, and the ancient religious beliefs that lie behind it. Eliot does not lament a more perfect past. The ancient message pervading the Grail theme is to think about sexuality in the right terms. The lesson of its historical survival is an indication of humanity's continual desire to position sexuality on a higher, almost divine plane .¹¹

The thunderous note that fills the air in the final part of Eliot's *The Waste Land*, as its subtitle of "What the Thunder Said" indicates, resonates with a

foreboding of the catastrophes ahead. Against the backdrop of the Upanishad and the repetition of "Da," Eliot meshes a web of allusions, each of which assumes apocalyptic overtones upon deep investigation .¹²

I sat upon the shore
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
Shall I at least set my lands in order?
London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down
Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina
Quando fiam uti chelidon O swallow swallow
Le Prince d'Aquitaine á la tour abolie
These fragments I have shored against my ruins
When Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.
Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.
Shantih shantih shantih (lines 423-33)

The image of the crumbling London Bridge (line 426) takes us back to Dante's *Inferno* and the doubting denizen of the Vestibule. The Dantesque mood prevails in the following line as Eliot alludes to the character of Dante meeting with twelfth-century troubador Arnaut Daniel, the only character to address Dante in his own native Provençal. Through various stages of history, mankind has always been a tasty victim to his evil passions. This may not have a significant effect in a short term, but this short-lived exuberance is turned into a dominant sense of distaste, since the burning effects continue to cast control over the society immeasurably .¹³

This traumatic experience clearly took place in 20th century with two demolishing wars spreading out to cast a contemplative doubt over the illegitimate legitimacy of the legitimate wisdom of modern world. These wars were not just a

reaction of patriots, though, instead, were minutely planned pretexts to form a union between the super powers. In this bridge which was expected to form this ally, people with the sense of duty toward the safety of their countries were sacrificed only to fulfill the desired outcome of destructive builders .¹⁴

Under the great dependence on the so-called knowledge and prudence, wars start to satisfy the inextinguishable hunger of the capitalists, who view war as a perfect opportunity to gain more wealth and power. In the past century two devastating World Wars occurred and the knowledge which Europe had based upon its foundation since the Enlightenment collapsed. Indeed, wars have become the widespread phenomena since then and now they are as vital as water is to the body .¹⁵

The indignation which is observed by Eliot in *The Waste Land* is not just simply the excruciating aftermaths of The Great War; rather, the moral degradation of a generation which is expected to be more alert to destructive values dominating their lives. It truly shows that men just do not learn from history. Eliot gives us the rampant result of being enchained by the neglect of spiritual values. At the beginning of the first part, 'The Burial of Dead', he gives a vivid picture of an era which is even fiercer than the chilling cold of winter .¹⁶

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 (3).

Therefore, this pitiable chaos only creates a nostalgic sense, and one is

naturally brought to regret his own deeds. This sense is expressed again by Eliot, when he witnesses a world of inaction with a bitter sigh.

Unreal City,
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.
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 (4).

It is to conjecture that now the people of London, or the people of the world, are astonished by the recent happenings. They are waiting in suspense of what they should do. Here one of the crucial aspects of Existentialism is concentrated on. To existentialists, action is inherently necessary and significant, and inaction is fundamentally equated with vacancy and waste. To Eliot as well the same idea has an underlying role in the lives of human beings. He believes that it may be better to do evil than to do nothing at all that some form of action at least means he still exists. Now, in the portrait of “a crowd flowed over London Bridge” the same notion is applied, when this motionless crowd is waiting the doom which is to fall upon them, the doom of inaction. They have gone into a crushing experience which now necessitates their resolution to a revolutionizing awakening in order to move forward to “shake and loosen the pillars of the logocentric authorities, who find the nations as the inherited slaves .¹⁷

To Eliot inaction provides the desired pretext for the power holders to gain and enhance their domination over the mute prisoners. That’s why the idea of

emancipation from the chains of ignorance is what which is always dreaded as the chief cause of taking the power from the authoritarian authorities. This is what Eliot stresses through the poem, as he sees this submission a tangible advantage to those who use sugar-coated words in order to gain the satisfaction of the ignorant common mass, which, unfortunately, constitutes the majority .¹⁸

Notes

¹ Nancy Gish, *The Waste Land: A Student's Companion to the Poem* (Boston: Twayne, 1988), p. 43.

² Ibid.

³ Marianne Thormählen, *The Waste Land. A Fragmentary Wholeness* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup,1978),p.4.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid,p.7.

⁶ T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land and Other Poems*(London: Faber and Faber,1972),p.55.

⁷ Pouneh Saeedi, "Eliot's The Waste Land and Surging Nationalisms" CLCWeb:Comparative Literature and Culture ,2011,p.19
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol13/iss4/14>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid,p.21.

¹⁰ Mohammad Ali Alaeddini, Mojtaba Jeihouni, Eliot's *The Waste Land: A Touchstone of Modernity*, Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research, 2013,p.26 www.textroad.com

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Lawrence Rainey (ed.) ,*The Annotated Waste Land with Eliot's Contemporary Prose*. Second edition (New Haven and London: Yale University Press,2005),p.87.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid,p.89.

¹⁵ L. Menand, *Discovering Modernism. T.S. Eliot and His Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,2007),p.63.

¹⁶ Ibid,p.65.

¹⁷ Jewel Spears Brooker, "Mimetic Desire and the Return to Origins in "The Waste Land"" *Gender, Desire, and Sexuality in T.S. Eliot*. Ed. Cassandra Laity and Nancy K. Gish (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004),p.31.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Conclusion

The Waste Land showed up during a time when European culture was battling in having a personality under the weight of the repercussions of World War I. Through such mental injury, a feeling of developing skepticism went with an anguished agnosticism ended up plainly across the board as an outcome. Under the heaviness of such mayhem, Eliot endeavored to give a picture of the Dystopian universe of severity and unreasonableness which was known to be an Utopian universe of astuteness and uniformity. Being the focal point of consideration for quite a long time, the assortment of the conceivable inductions made on the lyric makes it an adaptable touchstone. Its compactness, on one hand, makes the work effectively clear, yet its significance and representative dialect, then again, summons one's mindfulness toward the nonsensicalness of the cutting edge world, which is under the burden of sheer natural reason.

Considering such an idea, the present paper deciphers Eliot's *The Waste Land* in a setting which does not appear to have gotten due consideration by the faultfinders. It respects the unreasonable rationale of current man with sensitivity and sympathy keeping in mind the end goal to make a feeling of profound comprehension from the destructive mess in which humankind has stuck, and which is caused by being pushed toward otherworldly ruin.

One of the fundamental devices utilized by the essayists of nativist innovation was to deride absorption, praising the individuals who picked not to undermine American national character. They attested not the prevalence of American character, but instead the benefits of keeping up one's own particular culture. In this content, digestion wound up plainly recognized as suicide, for it implied the forfeit of one's own social character and thusly the devastation of the characterizing furthest reaches of individual personality.

The Waste Land does not simply mirror the breakdown of a verifiable, social, and social request battered by fierce powers working under the name of advancement. For Eliot the debacle that portrayed innovation was not an upsetting, but rather the unavoidable, and unexpected, summit of that very request so affectionately celebrated in Victoria's last decade on the position of royalty. Not at all like the more seasoned age, who found in occasions like the Great War the death of a brilliant age, Eliot saw just that the brilliant age was itself a stack of silly sociopolitical adages and unreasonable misreadings of the social past that had turned out to be made of the meanest composite.

Bibliography

Alaeddini, Mohammad Ali. "Mojtaba Jeihouni, Eliot's *The Waste Land*: A Touchstone of Modernity," *Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research*,

2013. www.textroad.com

Armstrong, John. *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

Brooker, Jewel Spears. "Mimetic Desire and the Return to Origins in 'The Waste Land'" *Gender, Desire, and Sexuality in T.S. Eliot*. Ed. Cassandra Laity and Nancy K. Gish (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Calhoun, Craig. *Nationalism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997).

Cooper, John Xiros. *The Cambridge Introduction to T. S. Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Corse, Sarah M. *Nationalism and literature The politics of culture in Canada and the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Eliot, T.S. *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972).

Gish, Nancy. *The Waste Land: A Student's Companion to the Poem* (Boston: Twayne, 1988).

Howarth, Herbert. *Notes on Some Figures behind T. S. Eliot* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964).

Kenner, Hugh. *The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot* (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1959).

Kerkering, John D. *The Poetics of National and Racial Identity in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Menand, L. *Discovering Modernism. T.S. Eliot and His Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Rainey, Lawrence (ed.). *The Annotated Waste Land with Eliot's Contemporary Prose*. Second edition (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005).

Saeedi, Pouneh. "Eliot's The Waste Land and Surging Nationalisms"
CLCWeb:Comparative Literature and Culture ,2011.
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol13/iss4/14>.

Thormählen, Marianne. *The Waste Land. A Fragmentary Wholeness* (Lund:
C.W.K. Gleerup,1978).

Chapter One

1.1 T. S. Eliot's Life and Career

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born into a distinguished family with roots in Boston and the New England of the early pilgrims. He was born on September 26, 1888 in St. Louis, Missouri on the banks of the Mississippi River. When Eliot was seven he began his formal education; he attended a small elementary school, and then, in autumn 1898, entering Smith Academy in order to prepare for university study. In St. Louis Smith was considered an educational stepping stone to the best universities ¹.

Eliot has been interested in reading since his youth and has become a model for the ideal student. In 1905, on completing the course of studies at Smith, Eliot was prepared for Harvard University and to prepare for this he was recorded at private school near Boston called Milton Academy, which sent many young men to Harvard. This was his first experience of being away from home for an extended period. He completed his year at Milton without any impediments and headed for Harvard in 1906.²

He particularized in this new environment and would stay there until 1914, following a masters degree and doctorate. His literary activities and intellectual set him away again, but this time in ways that were more productive. Harvard, at this time, along with other Ivy League schools, was filled with the sons of rich and powerful families and Eliot found himself in the company of many young men whose attentions and life choices were little intellectual or literary.³

When World War I (1914–1918) broke out, he transferred to Merton College, Oxford. It was in London that Eliot came under the influence of his

contemporary Ezra Pound, who recognized his poetic genius at once, and assisted in the publication of his work in a number of magazines, most notably *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* in 1915. His first book of poems, *Prufrock and Other Observations*, was published in 1917, and immediately selected As a pioneer poet . With the publication of *The Waste Land* in 1922, now considered by many to be the single most influential poetic work of the twentieth century, Eliot's fame began to grow to nearly mythic proportions; by 1930, and for the next thirty years he was the most controlling figure in poetry and literary criticism in the English-speaking world.⁴

As a poet, he transmuted his relationship for the English metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century and the nineteenth century French symbolist poets like Baudelaire and Laforgue into revolutionary restoration in poetic technique and subject matter. Eliot's poems in many respects articulated the disillusionment of a younger post-World War I generation with the values and conventions both literary and social of the Victorian era. As a critic he had a large effect on modern literary sense which showing views that after his conversion to orthodox Christianity in the late thirties, were based in social and religious conservatism.⁵

Eliot's later poetry collections include *Ash Wednesday* (1930) and *Four Quartets* (1943); his books of literary and social criticism include *The Sacred Wood* (1920), *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933), *After Strange Gods* (1934), and *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1940). As a playwright, he wrote verse dramas include *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), *The Family Reunion* (1939), and *The Cocktail Party* (1940) *The Confidential Clerk* (1954) and *The Elder Statesman*⁶. (1959)

Eliot was to accompany four careers: editor, dramatist, literary critic, and philosophical poet. He was the most thorough poet of his time in the English language. His undergraduate poems were “literary” and conventional. Eliot’s career as editor was auxiliary to his main interests, but his quarterly review, *The Criterion* (1922–39), was the most notable international critical journal of the period. from the early 1920s until his death and as such was a generous and supporter of young poets.⁷

He received the Nobel Prize and the British Order of Merit in 1948, and the list of his honors persistent to grow. After the *Four Quartets*, he committed himself to the poetic drama with *On Poetry and Poets* (1957), and the editing of collections of his poetry and plays. in 1848 his first wife dead and in 1957 Eliot married Valerie Fischer who was his private secretary, and remained married until his death in London on January 4, 1965.⁸

1.2Nationalism in Literature

National literatures are a supposition of modern cultural landscapes. In countries around the world schoolchildren in state-mandated courses read the

"Great Works" of their nation. Universities offer literature courses in a smorgasbord of national units: course catalogues list classes such as "Russian Masterpieces," "The Brazilian Novel," and "Major American Authors." The style, themes, and narratives of each nation's literary canon, the pantheon of most valorized and legitimated texts, are analyzed and debated both in the scholarly literature and in more general social commentaries⁹.

National literatures have traditionally been understood as reflections of the unique character and experiences of the nation. That is, it is felt that the unique experience of national life generates a national, collective consciousness, or in some formulations a "collective unconscious" marked by a distinctive set of values, tensions, myths, and psychological foci, that produces in turn a certain readily identifiable national character - the American cowboy or the French sophisticate, for example. This character, and the values, tensions, and myths from which it springs, is then discernible in indigenous cultural products. Thus the distinctiveness of a national literature is seen as the *natural embodiment* of the distinctive national character¹⁰.

Freedom Struggle brought into focus the notion of nationalism and one can deal with the subject 'Nationalism and Literature' very easily by describing patriotic writings as an expression of nationalist fervour of the people against a foreign domination which began to emerge in the nineteenth century particularly in every Indian language¹¹.

Nationalism is produced by tapping the most private attachment to ground for the purposes of the most public statecraft. It is predicated on reproductive heteronormativity: birthright. To "naturalize" is to legalize a simulacrum of

displaced birth, which becomes an actual birthright for the next generation¹².

Literature and nationalism were inextricably intertwined during the 18th century in Britain. There was the shift from Enlightenment cosmopolitanism to the Romantic preoccupation with localism and patriotism which marks the beginning of nationalism in literature. The growth of nationalism in literature was mostly due to the rise of a literate population, the bourgeoisie, which paved the way for a rise in demand for vernacular language usage and vernacular cultural texts¹³.

Walt Whitman and Washington Irving contributed to the formation of American literature through the very use of language. This language, then, served as a positive influence in placing America on its own literary map. Irving, for example, was one of the most popular and leading names who believed that we should model a new American identity in fiction. Later, of course, others followed his notion, i.e., the form of satire. Whitman is commonly accepted to be the first indisputable American poet. His use of free verse, different from European traditions, was used to symbolize America in its expansion, in its freedom, and its refusal to be confined to rank, custom, power structures, etc.¹⁴

The Literature of Nationalism concerns literature in its broadest sense and the manner in which, in belles lettres, the oral tradition and journalism, language and literature create national/nationalist myths. It treats East European culture from Finland to 'Yugoslavia', from Bohemia to Romania, from the nineteenth century to today. Both Irving and Whitman, in their own rights, contributed towards the making of literature which was essentially part of a historical movement overall in America in regard to literature nationalism.¹⁵

American literature has not continued to grow disproportionately national, disproportionately concerned with scenes and situations exclusively local and American. This tendency is evident in the work of such writers as Whitman, Howells, and Garland, not to mention contemporaries such as Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, and Sinclair Lewis; this tendency is encouraged, and its extension urged and prophesied, by such critics as John Macy, Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Lewis Mumford, Vernon Parrington, and Fred Lewis Pattee.¹⁶

Notes

¹ Hugh Kenner, *The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot* (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1959), p.3.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid,p.5.

⁴ Herbert Howarth, *Notes on Some Figures behind T. S. Eliot*(Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964),p.21.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ John Xiros Cooper ‘*The Cambridge Introduction to T. S. Eliot*)Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,2006‘(p.2

⁷ Ibid,p.3.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Sarah M. Corse‘ *Nationalism and literature The politics of culture in Canada and the United States*) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1997‘(p.13

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Buckingham: Open University Press,1997),p.17

¹² Ibid.

¹³ John Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press,1982),p.61.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ John D. Kerkerling ‘*The Poetics of National and Racial Identity in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*)Cambridge:Cambridge University Press,2003‘(p.7.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Chapter Two

Nationalism in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*

The Waste Land is a long poem by T. S. Eliot, widely regarded as one of the most important poems of the 20th century and a central work of modernist poetry. Published in 1922, the 434-line *The Waste Land* was the longest, most intelligent, most complex, and most ambitious poem that T.S. Eliot ever wrote. *The Waste Land* is a uniquely difficult poem. It is rife with allusions to such an extent that it remains largely incomprehensible to most casual readers. The reader would have to be fluent in seven languages just to understand the literal meaning of every word.¹

Yet linguistic barriers make up just the surface layer of the poem's difficulty. Armed with editorial notes, every reader has the capacity to understand the occasional Sanskrit phrase or source the reference to obscure sixteenth-century drama. Understanding what those references mean in the context of the other lines of poetry around them is more difficult and likewise more important.²

Eliot's poetic style employs two methods of expressing emotion, both difficult for the reader to appreciate. The first method is to bombard the reader with images and sounds abruptly, irregularly, and discordantly. Eliot uses this technique in theatrical scenes, quoting bits of conversation that come at the reader out of context and unexpectedly. The second method is to rely not on the literal sense of language but on the tone and rhythmical power of words. Everything in the poem has meaning but recognizing the tone of the verse, and when it changes, is essential to appreciate the emotions of the narrator and his attitude toward subjects.³

When Eliot references the Grail legend in *The Waste Land*, he has its deeper meanings in mind. He uses the Grail theme primarily as a metaphor for the current situation of two things: his private soul and European society. Eliot's title immediately evokes a situation of infertility, failure, and barrenness. On one level, *The Waste Land* is post-war Europe. *The Waste Land* in the medieval legend was also symbolically related to the Fisher King's impotence; so in Eliot's poem, one of *The Waste Land* is his own loveless marriage. Finally, *The Waste Land* is the narrator's private soul, as it looks for philosophical or religious answers to life's deepest questions, and struggles to fill a deeper spiritual vacuum .⁴

The modern man had become too hardened to accept Christian principles directly and, instead, must gradually be made aware of his condition. In order to achieve this, Eliot chronicled his journey of realization and revelation in the form of *The Waste Land*, using the protagonist of the poem to represent his own passage to spiritual awareness and to convince man of the degradation of society and the need for reform. The poem begins with the protagonist musing on spring.⁵

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. (1, 1-7)⁶

This passage is an indication of the extent of the degradation of man. He has sunken so low into depravity that he prefers to live a life of ignorance and to

disregard the fact that he is living a half-life. April, the month in which spring begins, is no longer a joyous time in which new life is celebrated, but a cruel time of rebirth that reminds man that his own life is terribly empty .⁷

The Waste Land is explicit in identifying the tradition from which it arises. The author provides a “Notes” section at the end in which he cites his own references. For example, as the “Notes” that follow the poem state, in line twenty “Son of man,” is a reference to Ezekiel II, I (ln 20). By using the Bible as the first textual reference of the poem Eliot grounds his poem firmly in western Christian tradition. The author is explicit as to what tradition he wishes to invoke, and makes the reader’s understanding of that fact unavoidable by citing it directly. In fact, the poet’s inclusion of the “Notes” section implies that he hopes to limit the ways in which *The Waste Land* can be interpreted. The poem remains continually anchored to Eliot’s conception of “Tradition” through his use of other literary references .⁸

The Waste Land reveals concerns about the changing world in the 1920s. Eliot wrote from a very specific perspective, focused on the literary and cultural traditions of Western Europe. The political changes in Europe and America pose a threat to the “Tradition” that Eliot is so invested in. And though Eliot’s poem is certainly political as it reflects his feelings on the consequences of the Great War, it does not participate in political debates of the era. It instead focuses on the maintenance of “Tradition,” supporting its survival at whatever cost. He utilizes these three issues to discuss his concern about the decline of what he saw as a worthy tradition in European history, from the Bible through the era in which he wrote. His use of citation, historical and literary references embed his own work into the very tradition that he is trying to defend .⁹

Eliot uses the Grail theme in juxtapositions with modernity, to illustrate how modern social changes departed from humanity's oldest spiritual insights. In modern times, sex is not life-giving or in any way related to the themes of fertility and regeneration associated with the ancient fertility cults and vegetation ceremonies. Modern people regard childbirth as an unfortunate side-effect of intercourse, to be treated scientifically or to be avoided by means of pills. The obligation to engage in intercourse threatens women's lives, as seen in line 160 how the woman "almost died of young George" because she "had five already."¹⁰

In lines 138-172, Eliot cited his maid as an example of the type of modern behavior he finds most troubling. In this section the narrator shows disgust toward some popular attitudes on marriage and sexuality. The scene takes place at closing time in a pub, as the repeated interruption of "Hurry up please it's time" indicates. Sex is not sacred, but the topic of drunken banter. Almost all of the references to sexuality in the poem tie into the Grail theme. It is not worth highlighting every one here, but in general the instances of modern sexuality are all at odds with the treatment given to it by both the Grail legend, and the ancient religious beliefs that lie behind it. Eliot does not lament a more perfect past. The ancient message pervading the Grail theme is to think about sexuality in the right terms. The lesson of its historical survival is an indication of humanity's continual desire to position sexuality on a higher, almost divine plane.¹¹

The thunderous note that fills the air in the final part of Eliot's *The Waste Land*, as its subtitle of "What the Thunder Said" indicates, resonates with a foreboding of the catastrophes ahead. Against the backdrop of the Upanishad and the repetition of "Da," Eliot meshes a web of allusions, each of which assumes

apocalyptic overtones upon deep investigation .¹²

I sat upon the shore
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
Shall I at least set my lands in order?
London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down
Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina
Quando fiam uti chelidon O swallow swallow
Le Prince d'Aquitaine á la tour abolie
These fragments I have shored against my ruins
When Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.
Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.
Shantih shantih shantih (lines 423-33)

The image of the crumbling London Bridge (line 426) takes us back to Dante's *Inferno* and the doubting denizen of the Vestibule. The Dantesque mood prevails in the following line as Eliot alludes to the character of Dante meeting with twelfth-century troubador Arnaut Daniel, the only character to address Dante in his own native Provençal. Through various stages of history, mankind has always been a tasty victim to his evil passions. This may not have a significant effect in a short term, but this short-lived exuberance is turned into a dominant sense of distaste, since the burning effects continue to cast control over the society immeasurably .¹³

This traumatic experience clearly took place in 20th century with two demolishing wars spreading out to cast a contemplative doubt over the illegitimate legitimacy of the legitimate wisdom of modern world. These wars were not just a reaction of patriots, though, instead, were minutely planned pretexts to form a union between the super powers. In this bridge which was expected to form this

ally, people with the sense of duty toward the safety of their countries were sacrificed only to fulfill the desired outcome of destructive builders .¹⁴

Under the great dependence on the so-called knowledge and prudence, wars start to satisfy the inextinguishable hunger of the capitalists, who view war as a perfect opportunity to gain more wealth and power. In the past century two devastating World Wars occurred and the knowledge which Europe had based upon its foundation since the Enlightenment collapsed. Indeed, wars have become the widespread phenomena since then and now they are as vital as water is to the body .¹⁵

The indignation which is observed by Eliot in *The Waste Land* is not just simply the excruciating aftermaths of The Great War; rather, the moral degradation of a generation which is expected to be more alert to destructive values dominating their lives. It truly shows that men just do not learn from history. Eliot gives us the rampant result of being enchained by the neglect of spiritual values. At the beginning of the first part, 'The Burial of Dead', he gives a vivid picture of an era which is even fiercer than the chilling cold of winter .¹⁶

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 (3).

Therefore, this pitiable chaos only creates a nostalgic sense, and one is naturally brought to regret his own deeds. This sense is expressed again by Eliot, when he witnesses a world of inaction with a bitter sigh.

Unreal City,
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.
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 (4).

It is to conjecture that now the people of London, or the people of the world, are astonished by the recent happenings. They are waiting in suspense of what they should do. Here one of the crucial aspects of Existentialism is concentrated on. To existentialists, action is inherently necessary and significant, and inaction is fundamentally equated with vacancy and waste. To Eliot as well the same idea has an underlying role in the lives of human beings. He believes that it may be better to do evil than to do nothing at all that some form of action at least means he still exists. Now, in the portrait of “a crowd flowed over London Bridge” the same notion is applied, when this motionless crowd is waiting the doom which is to fall upon them, the doom of inaction. They have gone into a crushing experience which now necessitates their resolution to a revolutionizing awakening in order to move forward to “shake and loosen the pillars of the logocentric authorities, who find the nations as the inherited slaves .¹⁷

To Eliot inaction provides the desired pretext for the power holders to gain and enhance their domination over the mute prisoners. That’s why the idea of emancipation from the chains of ignorance is what which is always dreaded as the chief cause of taking the power from the authoritarian authorities. This is what

Eliot stresses through the poem, as he sees this submission a tangible advantage to those who use sugar-coated words in order to gain the satisfaction of the ignorant common mass, which, unfortunately, constitutes the majority .¹⁸

Notes

¹ Nancy Gish, *The Waste Land: A Student's Companion to the Poem* (Boston: Twayne, 1988), p. 43.

² Ibid.

³ Marianne Thormählen, *The Waste Land. A Fragmentary Wholeness* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1978), p. 4.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid,p.7.

⁶ T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land and Other Poems*(London: Faber and Faber,1972),p.55.

⁷ Pouneh Saeedi, "Eliot's The Waste Land and Surging Nationalisms" *CLCWeb:Comparative Literature and Culture* ,2011,p.19
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol13/iss4/14>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid,p.21.

¹⁰ Mohammad Ali Alaeddini, Mojtaba Jeihouni, Eliot's *The Waste Land*: A Touchstone of Modernity, *Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research*, 2013,p.26 www.textroad.com

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Lawrence Rainey (ed.) ,*The Annotated Waste Land with Eliot's Contemporary Prose*. Second edition (New Haven and London: Yale University Press,2005),p.87.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid,p.89.

¹⁵ L. Menand, *Discovering Modernism. T.S. Eliot and His Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,2007),p.63.

¹⁶ Ibid,p.65.

¹⁷ Jewel Spears Brooker, "Mimetic Desire and the Return to Origins in "The Waste Land"" *Gender, Desire, and Sexuality in T.S. Eliot*. Ed. Cassandra Laity and Nancy

K. Gish (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004),p.31.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Conclusion

The Waste Land showed up during a time when European culture was battling in having a personality under the weight of the repercussions of World

War I. Through such mental injury, a feeling of developing skepticism went with an anguished agnosticism ended up plainly across the board as an outcome. Under the heaviness of such mayhem, Eliot endeavored to give a picture of the Dystopian universe of severity and unreasonableness which was known to be an Utopian universe of astuteness and uniformity. Being the focal point of consideration for quite a long time, the assortment of the conceivable inductions made on the lyric makes it an adaptable touchstone. Its compactness, on one hand, makes the work effectively clear, yet its significance and representative dialect, then again, summons one's mindfulness toward the nonsensicalness of the cutting edge world, which is under the burden of sheer natural reason.

Considering such an idea, the present paper deciphers Eliot's *The Waste Land* in a setting which does not appear to have gotten due consideration by the faultfinders. It respects the unreasonable rationale of current man with sensitivity and sympathy keeping in mind the end goal to make a feeling of profound comprehension from the destructive mess in which humankind has stuck, and which is caused by being pushed toward otherworldly ruin.

One of the fundamental devices utilized by the essayists of nativist innovation was to deride absorption, praising the individuals who picked not to undermine American national character. They attested not the prevalence of American character, but instead the benefits of keeping up one's own particular culture. In this content, digestion wound up plainly recognized as suicide, for it implied the forfeit of one's own social character and thusly the devastation of the characterizing furthest reaches of individual personality.

The Waste Land does not simply mirror the breakdown of a verifiable,

social, and social request battered by fierce powers working under the name of advancement. For Eliot the debacle that portrayed innovation was not an upsetting, but rather the unavoidable, and unexpected, summit of that very request so affectionately celebrated in Victoria's last decade on the position of royalty. Not at all like the more seasoned age, who found in occasions like the Great War the death of a brilliant age, Eliot saw just that the brilliant age was itself a stack of silly sociopolitical adages and unreasonable misreadings of the social past that had turned out to be made of the meanest composite.

Bibliography

Alaeddini, Mohammad Ali. "Mojtaba Jeihouni, Eliot's *The Waste Land*: A Touchstone of Modernity," *Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research*, 2013. www.textroad.com

Armstrong, John. *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

Brooker, Jewel Spears. "Mimetic Desire and the Return to Origins in 'The Waste Land'" *Gender, Desire, and Sexuality in T.S. Eliot*. Ed. Cassandra Laity and Nancy K. Gish (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Calhoun, Craig. *Nationalism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997).

Cooper, John Xiros. *The Cambridge Introduction to T. S. Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Corse, Sarah M. *Nationalism and literature The politics of culture in Canada and the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Eliot, T.S. *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972).

Gish, Nancy. *The Waste Land: A Student's Companion to the Poem* (Boston: Twayne, 1988).

Howarth, Herbert. *Notes on Some Figures behind T. S. Eliot* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964).

Kenner, Hugh. *The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot* (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1959).

Kerkering, John D. *The Poetics of National and Racial Identity in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Menand, L. *Discovering Modernism. T.S. Eliot and His Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Rainey, Lawrence (ed.). *The Annotated Waste Land with Eliot's Contemporary Prose*. Second edition (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005).

Saeedi, Pounesh. "Eliot's The Waste Land and Surging Nationalisms"

CLCWeb:Comparative Literature and Culture ,2011.
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol13/iss4/14>.

Thormählen, Marianne. *The Waste Land. A Fragmentary Wholeness* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup,1978).