

T.S ELIOT – THE WASTE LAND (THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD)

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Abstract: In the English literature, there are many outstanding writers that have given the best for the English as a world language. This research will examine T.S Eliot's poem, The Waste Land, specifically the first part of the poem, which is The Burial of the Dead, where the whole focus of this study is to provide a linguistic explanation regarding this poem. The fact that Eliot examined major themes of spiritual emptiness, loneliness, and despair, the main reason why this poem is being analyzed lies in the description of huge losses, including those of World War I, where the war demonstrates the negative aspects, such as the pains and the sufferings that affect every human being. Eliot uses The Waste Land's fragmented and chaotic structure, in order to illustrate how difficult is to find meaning in the modern world, by sharply contrasting the depictions of contemporary industrial civilization with mythological references. In The Waste Land, at the beginning of the poem, the seasons are described, mentioning that April is the cruelest month, because it crosses a barren landscape, where winter is much kinder. Eliot shifts to what appear to be more precise recollections from this hazy invocation of time and nature. The language used of Eliot's poem in The Burial of the Dead, which is the first part of the five sections, it is with some major changes, due to some words, but yet he has used perfect English, that is easily understood by readers. Since modernism in literature is fueled by industrialization and urbanization, many important works that Eliot has written during his life, influenced him to be a famous figure in the modern poetry, where he exercised a significant impact on Anglo-American culture and society. Eliot is credited with founding the modern poetry movement, where his poetry exemplifies high modernism in every way, including its emphasis on form as the bearer of meaning, its collage like juxtaposition of various voices, traditions and discourses, and its use of myth to support and organize atomized modern life. The poems and plays that Eliot published during his life, fill a single volume. His prose works are assemblages of conversations and sporadic pieces of journalism. The Waste Land (The Burial of the Dead) was written in the horrific times, and this poem explains how society has become disorganized and collapsed. In narrating this, the poet uses a wide range of topics, a multitude of imagery, and numerous languages and civilizations.

Keywords: English literature, The Waste Land, emptiness, loneliness, despair, losses.

1. INTRODUCTION

This research examines T.S Eliot's poem The Waste Land, where the first part of this poem is The Burial of the Dead. Since this poem was written in the horrific times, as mentioned in the abstract part, it is worth pointing out that the poem explains how society has become disorganized and collapsed. This is due to the fact of the negative aspects of World War I, because the war as a concept always describes the painful images that a human being has gone through. According to Beach (2022) – she claims that: *“T.S Eliot was one of the twentieth century's major poets primarily due to the way his unique poetic style changed the face of Modernism. He wrote poetry using different styles and images which differed distinctly all through the whole of his poetic career”* (Beach, 2022). Eliot's poetry illustrates high modernism, and since he is credited with founding the modern poetry movement, he uses this poem to describe how difficult is to find meaning in the modern world. Schein (2022) – states that: *“One major theme that Eliot treats in detail is the role of technology and industrialization in the downfall of Western civilization. Unlike earlier modern poets such as Walt Whitman, Eliot uses The Waste Land to draw connections between the mechanization and technological advancement in everyday life and the degradation of human dignity”* (Schein, 2022). From what Schein has concluded, it is understood that Eliot's poem can thus be interpreted as a critique of The Industrial Revolution and its social repercussion. In this regard, a researcher like Chapin (2020) on her article – claims that: *“One main theme is desire”* (Chapin, 2020). If the first part of the poem it is read, it will be understood that there is a clear description that the author describes the desire as a concept, where he is arguing that April is a cruel month, because there is a comparison of memory and desire. But the main theme of T.S Eliot's lengthy poem The Waste Land, which is a foundational piece of Modernist literature, it is in the pursuit of rebirth and atonement amid a desolate and spiritually devoid environment. Menand (2011) – claims that: *“Yet he was a true avant-gardist, and he made a revolution. He changed the way poetry in English is written, he reset the paradigm for literary criticism, and his work laid down the principles on which the modern English department is built”* (Menand, 2011, p. 10).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials and methods regarding this study are based in a small number of analyses, citations, and thoughts who stated something valuable regarding the poem. This is because this study will be focused on a linguistic explanation that Eliot has used in his poem, and that the poem itself it is used as the primary source. Trying to be more understandable, this study mostly focuses in distinguishing the Eliot's English, with the contemporary one.

3. THE ANALYSIS OF THE ELIOT'S THE WASTE LAND (THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD)

According to Bennet (2020) – he claims that: “*T.S Eliot's The Waste Land explores the broken world of England following the impact of World War One. Eliot's use of fragmented imagery with references to past work reflects the obliterated values of Europe after the First World War*” (Bennet, 2020). The first part of the passage will be analyzed. At the beginning of the poem, the seasons are described. April is the cruelest month, because it crosses a barren landscape where winter is much kinder. Eliot shifts to what appear to be more precise recollections from this hazy invocation of time and nature. The language used of Eliot's poem in *The Burial of the Dead*, which is the first part of the five sections, it is with some major changes due to some words, but yet he has used perfect English, that is easily understood by readers. Even though there may be some ambiguity in this poem, the main purpose of this research is to provide a linguistic explanation.

Part I

*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.
Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee
With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,
And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.
And when we were children, staying at the archduke's,
My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
In the mountains, there you feel free.
I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter. (Eliot, 1922: 5)*

While examining the first paragraph of the poem, there are discovered a number of grammatical distinctions between T.S Eliot's language and contemporary English, which are detailed below.

Phonology

T.S Eliot's use of phonology (sound devices) in *The Burial of the Dead* reinforces the poem's themes of the alliteration '*winter kept us warm*' creates a soft, and a hypnotic rhythm that contrasts with the harshness of the content, where winter is not just cold but an oppressive force that numbs the world (Eliot, 1922, p. 1). The use of assonance and consonance helps create a fluid musicality, in the line '*stirring/dull roots with spring rain*' – where the repetition of the letter *r* and *s* sounds that describes the motion which feels empty and lifeless (Eliot, 1922, p. 2). The phonology of the poem is significant in its role in destabilizing the reader, creating an unsettling rhythm that mirrors the thematic concerns of alienation and fragmentation (Leavis, 1932, p. 112).

Lexical Choices (Diction)

Eliot's diction in *The Burial of the Dead* is complex, portraying symbolic and thematic purposes. The contrast of the traditional associations of spring and the harsh portrayal of the month April as the '*cruellest month*' is one of the most striking aspects of his vocabulary. The overthrow '*April is the cruellest month*' associates the rebirth and renewal, introduces the sense of discommodity and concern, establishing the gloomy worldview of the poem (Eliot, 1922, p. 1). The words, such as: '*dead, forgetful, dull roots*' they mean decay and stagnation. The contrast between nature's typical association with fertility and Eliot's portrayal of it as lifeless underscores the theme of spiritual desolation (Friedman, 1956, p. 45).

Syntax and Structure

The syntax in *The Burial of the Dead* is fragmented, reflecting the disorganized and shattered nature of the modern world. Eliot's writing style used in the poem, describes one-line flows into the next without a grammatical break, where a sense of fluidity and dislocation is produced. (Eliot, 1922, p. 1). Eliot's syntax challenged readers to contend with the poem's disarray, in which a sense of isolation and fragmentation it is described. The not regular rhythm, combined with sudden shifts in tone and imagery, mimics the sensory overload and emotional fragmentation of modern existence (Hughes, 1975, p. 56).

Adjective

The adjective '*cruellest*' it is part in the first stanza of the passage. In Modern English the use of '*cruel*' in the superlative form will be '*cruellest*' – even though nowadays, it is commonly spelled as '*cruelst*.'

Adverbial Clause

'*April is the cruellest month, breeding Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing*' can be considered as an adverbial clause. This phrase clarifies why April is considered as a *cruel* month.

Themes and Linguistic Reflection of Modernism

The language used in *The Burial of the Dead* by T.S Eliot reflects the desire of the modernism in order to depart from traditional forms and tackle the fragmentation of Post-World War I experiences. Eliot's disjointed syntax, symbolic imagery, and allusions create a disorienting effect, challenging the reader to find meaning in a world that has lost its coherence and stability (Leavis, 1932, p. 112). Eliot's linguistic aspect in the poem is crucial because he wants to describe the brokenness, alienation, and the sufferings of the time, which was a primary goal of the modernist literature. Through complex syntax, dense imagery, and layered references, Eliot reflects the deep uncertainties of the modern condition. The poem itself becomes a linguistic artifact of a world in crisis, where traditional forms of meaning-making have broken down.

4. DISCUSSION

Rajkumar (2020) – states that: "*The Waste Land by T.S Eliot is the landmark in the history of English Poetry. T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land explains the modern man's life in a fragmented way, so it's looking gloomy and bleak*" (Rajkumar, 2020). Therefore, as a topic of discussion regarding the Eliot's poem, *The Waste Land* (*The Burial of the Dead*), it is the description of the poet's perfect English, where he explains the sufferings and the pains that have been caused due to the World War I. There are many important words, and phrases that Eliot has used in the poem, where the issue does not end with just what is read, so the author brings different messages through the poem. The phrase: *April is the cruellest month, breeding Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing* – clarifies that April as a month is considered as a cruel month, due to the sufferings that have been affected many people. *Memory and desire, stirring, Dull roots with spring rain* – spring rain brings up the unpleasant past, and a reminder of love. *Winter kept us warm, covering Earth in forgetful snow, feeding, A little life with dried tubers* – the phrase clarifies that winter seems to be warm because the snow covers up the ground (the memories), and life was like dried-up bulbs under the earth, shielded, suppressed. *Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee, With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade, And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten. And drank coffee, and talked for an hour* – suddenly, summer arrived, raining across Lake Starnbergersee. In this phrase: the message is that when it was raining, they have stopped in the colonnade, and when the rain ended, they have walked to Hofgarten, and they have talked for an hour where they drank the coffee. *Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt Deutsch* – is in German language, meaning: *I am not Russian at all, I come from Lithuania, a real German*. Which means in this passage of the first part, there is a combination of German language. Marie was not Russian. She had come from Lithuania and was a German. *And when we were children, staying at the archduke's, My cousin's, he took me out on a sled, And I was frightened* – Marie added that when they were children, they were living at the archduke's house. Her cousin took outside on a sled (a vehicle that rides over the snow), and I was scared. *He said, Marie, Marie, hold on tight. And down we went* – her cousin asked her to hold him tight, and down the hill they went. *In the mountains, there you feel free* – the sense of freedom is shown up there in the mountains. *I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter* – where she is reading all the night, and where she is traveling in south, when winter comes.

5. CONCLUSION

The poem is typical of Modernism in that it requires the reader to actively analyze the text through its fragmentary visuals and cryptic allusions. This linguistic analysis of *The Burial of the Dead* describes how Eliot has used the grammatical aspects, such as the phonology, the lexical choices (diction), the syntax, the adjective, the adverb, and linguistic reflections which creates a description about the vision of the modern world. The message and the meaning of this poem is magnificent, due to the fact that the author clearly describes the misfortunes and pains that affect every human being, and that the sufferings that war demonstrates, which are truly incurable wounds for every

individual, specifically for those who has experienced it. Since Eliot’s vocabulary was very rich, and that he contributed greatly in the period of Modernism with his very prominent works, for us as readers there may be some words, phrases, that are unknown, but yet he has used perfect English that it is easily understood by us as readers.

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