

An influence of World War 1914-1918: Perspective of Humanities

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Abstract:

“There was no really good true war book during the entire four years of the war. The only true writing that came through during the war was in poetry. One reason for this is that poets are not arrested as quickly as prose writers”

– Ernest Hemingway, in “*Men at War*”

World wars had a tremendous impact on society. This influence resulted in a new approach to art, literature, philosophy, and religion. It created a new genre of literature about the war. As a result, the wars had a significant impact on the genre and style of novels that were published. The majority of what was published at the time was about the war and its consequences. The experience of war disappointed authors, and while they did not write directly about the war, their writing reflects an anti-authoritarianism derived from their experiences. From the beginning of World War I to the end of World War II, literature evolved into what we know today.

The Great War, started in July 1914 and ended in November 1918 between the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria) and the Allies Powers (Russia, France, Britain, Italy, and the United States). It shifted people's perspectives; writers' subjects and literary techniques shifted; and readers' tastes and expectations shifted. It has had numerous significant influences on American literature. T.S. Eliot's poem "The Waste Land," for example, which he referred to post-war Europe, expressed anguish about life through a variety of historical, religious, and literary references. Eliot witnessed the social upheaval and transformation that accompanied World War I. His work was heavily influenced by the modernist movement, and it became the greatest expression of that movement. This paper is an attempt to analyse how literature has been drawing a path for the artists and writers. How they responded to the war in their own idiosyncratic ways.

Keywords: war, breakdown of civilization, individuality, futility,

Introduction

After the First World War, society and Europe faced serious problems of disillusionment.. In the midst of this trauma, T.S.Eliot's The Wasteland appeared, when European society was unsure of itself. It became a popular work in a chaotic and inhuman world. The poem that describes the

barbarism of war, the world being destroyed, and the poet questioning the possibility of redemption in the spiritual wasteland of 1922 Europe. Eliot hopes to keep those things alive. fragments against the rubble and found the roots clinging to each other by assembling a large number of texts and also bringing together opposing religious doctrines. In this research paper I would like to relate 'The Wasteland' as a post war poem.

Analysis

"The Wasteland" Eliot's prophetic poem lays bear a surprising , terrifying truth in post-war London. The poem "The Wasteland" had a huge impact on the post-war generation and is considered one of the most important documents of its time. The poem presents modern London as an arid desert. According to Nico Carpentier, "war remains a universal phenomenon" and is "the universal norm in human history. The effect of war on the human body is unimaginable. It not only destroys or mutilates the human body physically but also psychologically, causing immense pain and trauma. Erikson (1976, 153) defines this personal trauma as "a blow to the psyche that breaks its defenses so suddenly and with such brutal force that one is unable to react to it in any way." The analysis of the persona of the poem, Teresias, the Greek blind prophet who, according to Eliot as cited by Kenner, is "not...a 'character', yet the most important personage of the poem, uniting all the rest...what Teresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem" (128-129). Teresias comes as preachy in his scathing attack on the unrighteousness of modern people. Poem as a critique of postwar European society deals with the evils of a society, a representation of a single protagonist through the various characters of Madame Sosostris, Stetson, The Rich Lady, Philomela, a typist, Mr. Eugenides, Phlebas. Eliot's poetry is marked by witty satire, satire, boredom, emptiness and pessimism in his own day. "The Wasteland" is one of the most important documents after World War 1. Based on the legend of the Fish King in the Arthurian cycle, the poem presents modern London as a dry Wasteland. T.S.Eliot's symbols of drought and flood represent "death" and "rebirth", and the poem goes through five sections: "The Burial of the Dead", "The Game of Chess", "The Fire Sermon", "The Death of". Water" and "What the Thunder Said". The works of TS Eliot were influenced by Indian philosophy, the Holy Gita, the Vedas and Upanishads, and Buddhism. Eliot was more modern and educated than most of his contemporaries. His true understanding of modernity helped him warn society against the evils of unrestrained modernism, speaking through the Holy Bible and trying to show the way to God. The reference to the three "shantis" at the end, however, is an Upanishad perspective, while references such as the "Holy Grail" and "The Myth of the Fisher King" reflect Christian mythology. T.S.Eliot belonged to the age of decay, when all of Europe became a spiritually barren land - a desert. The dominance of Christian culture in these areas led them to nothing but materialistic goals and endless sensual pleasures. The poet is very concerned about people's indifference to religion, sacred institutions and sanctity. The poet feels that death is a necessary condition for life and death is the door to rebirth and a better life. Cyclical features of death and life can be seen not only in humans but also in nature. Nature rests in winter and revives in spring.

In the chaotic and inhuman world poems depiction of war torn civilization raises a significant questions. As Cara Williams quotes Dupree in her essay 'Literary Analysis' for "The Wasteland" - "The work that best expressed the mood of a post war generation disillusioned by the loss of ideals and faith in progress." (Dupree 7) The program of enlightenment failed miserably. Man in his pride and in the name of progress with science at its disposal created many ways of comfort in one side

and destruction on the other. Old values for religious beliefs were on the question mark. Everything was under scrutiny enough to shatter man's spiritual and moral being. Essence of man became what Eliot's haunting line describes 'I will show you fear in a handful of dust' this represents the dark allusion to death, morality, and the ultimate hollowness of all human. There are other connotations as well as the line appears in the very first section "The Burial of the Dead" which is a reference to the man's origin dust to dust from the book of common prayer and Genesis 3:19 where God tells Adam 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.' Poem not only expressed sorrowful condition of modern society but it was an expression of his personal feeling too. Eliot's amalgamation of rituals, myths and old beliefs to awaken the dead Christian principles among the people and to lead them to spiritual awareness and to reform. According to Dupree as quoted by Cara Williams "his reading in these and similar studies provided a way of seeing behind present day actions a substratum of past beliefs and practices that, though now lost to consciousness continue to inform our daily lives in hidden but significant ways." These lines indicate the degradation of man and his sinking low into immorality. Man lives a 'Half life' and prefers to live in ignorance.

The poem's structural design into five different sections imaging five different scenes of an European society after the World War I situating dead land expressed as spiritual famine and drought (Bloom 40). To corroborate this, an interpretation of the poem, Andrew Ross describes *The Waste Land* as a metaphor expressing the "cultural infirmity of Europe after the Great War . . . [as] a sign of [the] post-War times" (134). This argument for the metaphorical nature of the poem is valid; the text repeatedly refers to the decay of western civilization after World War I. The speaker observes the "Unreal City," London, after the War—"under the brown fog of a winter dawn / A crowd [flowing] over London Bridge" (lines 60-62). He is disillusioned and confused at the scene; he "had not thought death had undone so many" (63). This surreal and foggy image of London—its streets filled with "sighs, short and infrequent," and "each man fixed his eyes before his feet" (64-65)—accurately and poignantly demonstrates the despair and grim reality of modern Europe. Rather than discussing the condition of modern Europe in factual terms, Eliot uses the poetic, the allusive, and the obscure to depict an image of the physical desolation of the war-torn society and also communicate a sense of spiritual disillusionment and despair. According to Eric Svarny, the dry, barren, lifeless images in the poem and the undeniable sense of futility form an "evocation of post-war London" (160). Svarny notes that the image of London in the poem is characterized by "guilt, shock, [and] incomprehension of traumatized society manifested . . . through historical, cultural, psychic dislocations" (163). One can go on with many interpretations, but aforementioned pages is just my reconsideration of poem's analysis in which tiny aspect was taken care of.

Conclusion

But is there any reference Eliot is referring to salvage the humanity and make the 'unreal city' real again, requiring the readers to take active role. We do find poet's representation of the literary landscape is full of hopeful words and redemption. From the very first section giving hope of having a revival in a world of lost souls. The spiritual death will give rebirth to the dead souls. The word 'shanties' repetition makes point across the readers that peace can restore order, as Eliot's answer comes with a rhetorical question alluding to Fisher King, "Shall I at least set my lands in order?" To conclude we can say, to heal the fracture, the poem represents a therapeutic exercise not only for himself but for the whole generation.