Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH) (e-ISSN : 2504-8562)
2023, Volume 8, Issue 9, e002464
DOI: https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v8i9.2464

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Navigating Cultural Desolation: Exploring T.S. Eliot's Depiction of Anxiety and Fragmentation in *The Waste Land*

Mohammed Sarwar Alam[1*], Hayati Binti Ismail[2]

[1]Faculty of Major Language Studies. Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia. Bandar Baru Nilai, Nilai 71800, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia.
Email: sarwarchk1973@gmail.com
[2]Faculty of Major Language Studies. Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia. Bandar Baru Nilai, Nilai 71800, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia.
Email: hayati.ismail@usim.edu.my

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR (*):
Mohammed Sarwar Alam (sarwarchk1973@gmail.com)

KEYWORDS:
Anxiety
Modern condition
Cultural wasteland
Decline of traditional values
Fragmentation

CITATION:
Mohammed Sarwar Alam & Hayati Ismail. (2023). Navigating Cultural Desolation: Exploring T.S. Eliot's Depiction of Anxiety and Fragmentation in The Waste Land. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH), 8*(9), e002464. https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v8i8.2464

ABSTRACT

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888–1965), a remarkable English literary figure, is best known for the depiction of his age in his literary works. In this regard, scholars suggest that he lived and wrote in "an age of anxiety" and this very "anxiety" is often attributed to "profound transformations in human modes of life" engendered by cultural and institutional practices of modern condition. In Eliot, one can easily sense this phenomenon particularly in his early poems. These poems are said to have embodied this "anxiety" with great depth. In this regard, The Waste Land considered as one of the representative poems of modernist English literature, captures the crisis and anxiety of his age provocatively. Here, he draws the picture of a cultural waste land of post war Europe where the traditional way of life was disintegrating through the decline of traditional values, authority and order. The waste-landers of Eliot, to a large extent, suffer from loss of faith, loss of social nature of personality that created fragmentations in their lives. In this paper, through a method of analytical understanding and interpretation of the poem The Waste Land relating to its social and historical contexts, we will make an understanding of it focusing nature and extent of cultural anxiety depicted by Eliot. Thus, our study would contribute further to clarify the Eliotic understanding of cultural anxiety in the context of modernity as depicted in The Waste Land.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land," delving into its themes of cultural anxiety, fragmentation, and spiritual decay in the modern world. It offers fresh insights into the poem's portrayal of anxiety and its implications for contemporary society.

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1. Introduction

The Waste Land (Eliot, 1922), a 434-line poem by Tomas Stearns Eliot, is often considered as a canonical cultural text. It is one of the classic poems of modernist literature portraying the crisis of modern European societies that have been experiencing the burden of modernity- "*industrialization, urbanization, mechanization, gross materialism, psycho-social fragmentation*" (Gharabegian, 2008) which were visible in the daily lives of Eliot's contemporaries. Now it is fashionable to read *The Waste Land* as "the drama of a personal crisis" of Eliot but when the poem was first published, it was mostly read as "reflecting the mood of breakdown, despair and futility in the Europe" and "the sense of nihilism and dread following the material and spiritual devastation" (Cooper, 2004) which was prevalent in the contemporary European societies after the First World War (1914-1918).

Eliot lived and wrote at a time that has often been described as "an age of anxiety," and this anxiety is frequently linked to "profound transformations in human modes of life" (Lewis, 2015) brought about by cultural and institutional practices of the contemporary condition. Eliot's early poems are said to have embodied the crisis and anxiety of the age evocatively and provocatively. While one of his early poems *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (Eliot, 1915; Ferguson et al., 2005) acutely portrays the crisis of a modern subject, *The Waste Land*, another early poem, sketches the crisis and anxiety of the modern spaces where modern subjects have to live. In this poem, Eliot draws the picture of a cultural waste land of post war Europe where things were falling apart through the decline of traditional values, authority and order. The waste-landers of Eliot, to a large extent, suffer from loss of faith, loss of social nature of personality that created fragmentations in their lives.

To go to the heart of crisis of modern society as depicted by Eliot (1922) in *The Waste Land*, it would be worthwhile to survey briefly how this modern societies and their cultural and institutional practices emerged in the context of Europe. Roughly from sixteenth century, through Renaissance-Reformation-Enlightenment the modern worldview and its consequent cultural and institutional ground took place. Usually, the term "modern" implies a progressive change for man and society in an imagined linear time signifying no absolute meaning and destination for them. Bardoloi (1997) argues that in modern times, "Faustian strivings of mankind through generations" have played vital roles to emancipate the modern individuals to detach from the historical and cultural bonds and analogous guiding factors. Sociologists from Emil Durkheim to Max Weber have considered these guiding factors are identified with the traditions of religion (Webb, 2009). In the context of Europe, Poll (2013) remarks, Present day European societies and cultures are not only the outcome of age-old influence of Christianity, but also deeply influenced by modes of thoughts and movements that deliberately distance themselves from Christianity…marked by secularization in politics and public life, by modes of thought that more or less have rejected traditional doctrines and ethical claims of Christianity.

Thus, there gradually emerged "modern men" and "modern societies" while traditional values and societies declined and modern capitalist industrial society emerged. Another feature of modern societies is large scale migration from rural settings to urban settings. This has caused not only economic shift in the lives of people but also it has severed "the living web of relatedness and the balance of those relationships" (Freeland, 2015). Traditionally, people used to remain symbiotically related with this rural and cultural

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setting. Thus, according to Kocka (2016), this urbanization process through innovations in technology, massive exploitation of energy sources, and spread of factory as a manufacturing plant in contrast to craft workshop brought a "complex and far-reaching socio-economic transformation" in modern world. In urban settings, the people found themselves in different cultural phenomenon whose cultural logics were different from the traditional rural ones. The basic principle of modern urban structure is based on profit making and it has developed a hierarchy of money and power. Freeland (2015) opines that liberalism and democracy are being used as a discursive mask to divert the attention of vulgarity associated with the capitalist production system. In this regard, Eliot (1948) in one of his later essays has questioned:

Was our society, which had always been assured of its superiority and rectitude, so confident of its unexamined premises, assembled round anything more permanent than congeries of banks, insurance companies and industries, and had it any beliefs more essential than a belief in compound interest and the maintenance of dividends?

Giddens (1990) articulates that the nation state and the systematic capitalist production are the experience of modern worldview at institutional level. On the other hand, modern cultural and philosophic development has been said to have imposed a barrier "between the Western mind and it's more primal depths" (Cooper, 2006). Eventually, the God-centred (theocentric) worldview has been replaced by man-centred (anthropocentric) worldview. Thus, modern worldview has devalued the perennial values of life which were traditionally held sacred and permanent regarding the issues-the origin of humanity, human destiny, the purpose of life and other related matters. As stated above, modern worldview and its instructional practices have disrupted and replaced traditional way of life sustained by cultural traditions for ages. These cultural traditions are usually identified with religions which used to provide guiding factors for life which sociologists from Emil Durkheim to Max Weber have identified with the traditions of religion (Webb, 2009). In his The Idea of a Christian Society, Eliot (1948) has quoted from an anonymous writer to support his view that for harmonious and comprehensive human life, we have to make a balance between the spiritual, political and economic aspects of life both culturally and institutionally:

Men have lived by spiritual institutions in every society, and also by political institutions and indubitably by economic activities. Admittedly, they have, at different periods, tended to put their trust mainly in one of the three as the real cement of society, but at no time have they wholly excluded the others, because it is impossible to do so.

But, through the transition from the traditional to modern worldviews, the balance has been lost as economic and political dimension of life have undermined the spiritual vision and coherence of life. Due to this, there has been the prevalent cultural anxiety in modern society at both individual, social and philosophic levels. Eliot's (1922) The Waste Land can be read as an epic depiction of this anxiety of the modern society, particularly European society.

2. Literature Review

Eliot's (1922) remarkable poem *The Waste Land* has been being widely researched throughout six to seven decades from different perspectives. Here, the relevant and important scholarly works of the poem has been discussed as part of literature review of this paper. *The Waste Land* is one of the most well-known and widely-discussed poems

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that has depicted the crises of modern times in an atypical way. To illustrate the crises, the author has applied the mythical method in narrating his realization. He has drawn continuous parallels between the contemporaneity and the antiquity. His allusions pan across various cultures. To Lewis (2015), *The Waste Land* is a "collage of poetic fragments to create the sense of speaking for an entire culture in crisis; it was quickly accepted as the essential statement of that crisis and epitome of a modernist poem."

The poem metaphorically portrays the modern Europe. It depicts the anomie and angst suffered by modern people who are suffering from confusion as they do not find any normative standard of life to abide by. Aimlessness, rootlessness and meaninglessness are characteristics of modern people considered from the traditional point of view. In this regard, *The Waste Land* can be read as a testament to the disillusionment of a generation, an expression on the manifest despair and spiritual bankruptcy of the years after World War 1. The people in the waste land appear to be unreal as they fail to locate the real purpose of life and they appear to be frail and grim. So, the poet identifies the city of London to be "Unreal City" where the crowds of people suffer from disintegration and fragmentation in their daily lives. The life of people in London (a representative city of modern time in Europe) as depicted in *The Waste Land*, is characterized by "incomprehension of traumatized society manifested through historical, cultural and psychic dislocations" (Svarny, 1989).

It appears that the waste landers have been detached from their cultural roots that have sustained them and gave density of meaning to their life. Bardoloi (1997), referring to Paul Fussell argues that Eliot's early poems depict disintegration at least at three levels: microcosm of the individual's subjectivity, the macrocosm of social organization and design and the total philosophical and historical pattern in time. *The Waste Land* has depicted the fragmentation of modern men at all the three levels.

To Sufian (2014), in *The Waste Land*, Eliot (1922) has symbolically suggested the crisis of spiritually dead men. He argues that in 'an age of worry', the 'disease of the age' has become a core issue of the poem and through 'mythical method', the poet makes a parallel between the modern life and that of antiquity. And, to him, the poem depicts a claustrophobic world and regeneration and hopefulness are far-fetched. Rhee (2012), argues that the poem presents the elements what the modern society believes in. According to Eliot's (1922) depiction of modern world in *The Waste Land*, the characteristic features of modern society are obscurity, chaos, disillusionment. Rhee (2012) further views that in a world void of meaning and fulfillment, the modern man suffers from despair arising from futility of life and relationships.

Dzwonkoski (1970), views that in depicting the modern land, Eliot (1922) presents the spiritual poverty of the modern man and its consequent cultural crisis in their daily lives and social relationships. The poem presents the cultural incarnation of the spiritual vacuity and there is a desire also for overcoming and recovery. But the author could only search out some fragments or indications which are not sufficient enough to provide an organic unity to fulfill the vacuity.

Pani (2013) makes a discussion of Eliot's (1915, 1922) poems as portrayals of man's existential crisis- the confusion and despair that a man has to face existentially. To him, modern economic determinism, scientific materialism and empiricism have made the individuals strangers to themselves and to the world. Thus, a disorientation of personality has sent in. eventually, this has led modern men to the tragedy of

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meaninglessness. In this regard, Pani (2013) argues that Eliot's poems brings before us the major existential preoccupations- "anxiety, fear of nothingness, urban indifference, the absurd loneliness and confrontation with death". The Waste Land, one of Eliot's (1922) remarkable poems deals with existential crisis provocatively. Cooper (2004) has evaluated *The Waste Land* from the perspective of modern market society to a large extent. He argues that in the last two hundred years the capitalist revolution has brought immense material and moral transformations in the life-world and from the perspective of an older moral order, the transformations have been disastrous. To him, there has been the "degradation of men into commodities." In his poem, Eliot (1922), to a large extent has portrayed the degraded humanity in the modern waste land.

I have observed that the cultural anxiety depicted in *The Waste Land* has not been adequately discussed in the literature I have reviewed. Particularly, cultural anxiety visible in the fragmentation and alienation felt by the characters within themselves and because of detachment with the surroundings, loss of faith and loss of social nature of personality could be more studied and focused. It is also observed that hardly any research has focused that the modern fragmentations and anxiety have been largely caused through the decline of traditional order, value and moral vision of life. In this study, I have made a humble attempt to fill in the gap as much as possible.

3. Methodology

My approach to deal with the cultural anxiety in Eliot's *The Waste Land* employing a literary methodology of reading and analyzing a text in relation to social cultural and historical context. Mckee (2001) observes, "*when we perform textual analysis on a text, we make an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text*." Through the method of textual understanding and analysis of the poem *The Waste Land* relating to its social, cultural and historical contexts, I will make a thorough analysis of it focusing nature and extent of cultural anxiety depicted by Eliot. Thus, our study would contribute further to clarify the Eliotic understanding of cultural anxiety in the context of modernity.

4. Findings and discussion

Mambrol (2020) argues that Eliot was keenly interested in the poetic expression of social and moral dilemmas and inner anxieties of his time. His early poems, particularly, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", *The Waste Land* and "The Hollow Men" are said to have embodied the disintegration of modern life and it anxiety more poignantly. *The Waste Land* could be studied as one of the leading poems in this regard. Mukamal (2017), thinks, "Eliot's early verse objectifies-by its very rhetorical embodiment-a crippling array of symptoms of the physical, moral, and spiritual devolution that he observes in European society…". *The Waste Land* is remarkable in portraying the devolution.

The Waste Land consists of five fragmentary sections. Its apparent fragmentary structure reflects the fragmentation of the land and time it depicts. The five sections are: "The Burial of the Dead", "A Game of Chess", "The Fire Sermon", "Death by Water" and "What the Thunder Said". Through a mythological character named Tiresias and mythical method applied by the author, the poem has been given a kind of thematic unity. Through fragmented sections and fragmented experiences of the characters in the poem, the poet presents fragmented and alienated cultural experiences as well as

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anxieties of the waste landers in modern world. Mahfoud (2009) argues, in fact, the poem, the Waste Land, goes beyond the boundaries of one place or one event to give a portrayal of a universal waste land, which in the poems before *The Waste Land*, Eliot (1922) portrays with all its places and people and the lack of spirituality.

Again, it appears fragmentation represents fragmentation of modern life and Hinchliffe (1987) mentions, "*one theme of the poem is the fragmented nature of contemporary society, so that the only way to present it dramatically would be in fragments*." Apparently, the poem is a collection of fragmented episodes. But this fragmentary method is used to symbolize modern people's "fragmented, discontinuous perception of the 'real'" (Traversi, 1976).

At the beginning of the poem there is an epigram. It refers to Cumaean Sibyl, a mythological figure who was granted immortality but not eternal youth. Predictably, her immortality became a curse and due to increased infirmity and debilitation. She continuously longed to die out of sufferings. To Bloom, this epigrammatic reference is provocative and indicative of the reflections of Eliot (1922) on the crisis of modern civilization. Bloom (2007) remarks, "…Her condition reflects the condition of the civilization Eliot leads the reader through in *The Waste Land*, a culture of living death." Analytically, "a culture of living death" could be considered as the crisis suffered the people out of cultural anxiety.

> **The Burial of the Dead**:
> *The first part of the poem is titled as "The Burial of the Dead" implying death and resurrection. The vary first stanza is popularly quoted and it shocks the reader as it depicts the picture of a broken culture:*
> *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.* (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922)

In the very first line of the poem, Eliot (1922) depicts a picture of April which contrasts with that of Geoffrey Chaucer (1340 AD-1400 AD) in *Canterbury Tales*. While Chaucer depicts April to be a month of regeneration, optimism and flourishment, Eliot (1922) depicts it to be pessimism, confusion and melancholy. Despite the fact the April is widely considered as the month of sanguine hope and regeneration, in Eliot's (1922) introspection, the people in the modern waste land have lost the hope and they are suffering from the lack regenerative wills and actions. The "spring rain" of April are supposed to regenerate "Lilacs out of the dead land" and stir the "dull roots" but symbolically, the waste landers are suffering from the sluggishness and passivity. The potential "desire" of April by its "rains" out of "memory" symbolically represents that people in the waste land despite having innate capacity to regenerate themselves are suffering from forgetfulness about their ultimate aims of life. They are drying their possibilities through self-defeating negligence.

Parashar (2015) remarks, "…*sadly modern man is struck between the 'memory' of the past and 'desire' for the future to revive it*." Here, "memory" alludes to the reminding of "spiritual awakening" (Mahfoud, 2009) that the people in the modern world tend to

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forget. Jain (1991) observes, "awareness causes pain and suffering, consequently most people suffer oblivion from the burden of consciousness, and death-in-life existence."

In *The Waste Land*, we do find any formal introduction or setting. There is the first statement of the seven lines and then we are introduced with Marie, a girl belonging to an aristocratic class. She spends her time aimlessly- travelling, gossiping, sledging, drinking coffee and reading books till late night. Then, Marie's cousin is mentioned and he follows the same lifestyle like Marie. Mahfoud (2009) argues that the lifestyles of Marie and her cousin indicate that modern people spend having no higher aim and they dislike warmth of spring which symbolizes the spiritual awakening. They spend time mostly talking and drinking coffee and this is a recurrent criticism of modern lifestyle in many poems of T.S Eliot (Jain, 1991).

After the episode of Marie and her cousin, according Bloom (2007), the poet raises the central question of the poem, "What are the roots that clutch?" (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922) and Bloom (2007) asserts that the provocative question "states directly the problem the poem confronts throughout its five cryptic, fragmented sections." As a complimentary question Eliot raises another question, "what branches grow out of this stony rubbish?" "Branches" and "stoney rubbish" symbolically represent "people's lives" and "culture". Obviously, the poet makes a relation between "roots", "branches" and "culture" implying that in "stony rubbish" no roots or branches are supposed to sprout and thrive.

Bloom (2007) presents an analysis of the question, "How can there be a civilization worthy of mankind and how can mankind itself be whole, wholesome, and create a worthy culture, if the environment in which it grows undermines life rather than nurtures it." And "How can rootlessness and uprootedness be repaired?". In answer to the questions raised by the poet, the poet answers with Biblical resonance: "Son of man, / You cannot say or guess (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922). It implies that the waste landers are unable to see the reality as they are uprooted. They are only interested in meaningless images and lead meaningless lives. In the articulation of the poet, "…for you know only/A heap of broken images" (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922). Their lives are dried with "no sound of water" (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922) which is symbol of renewal and regeneration. Here, Bloom (2007) makes an insightful comment, "The Waste Land is a riddle the reader must unravel in the quest to find "roots that clutch." But there is a concluding line in the poem, "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922) implying that the poet's search has remained fragmentary in the quest he makes for an integrated worldview or cultural wholeness.

The poet invites the spiritually dead waste landers to take shelter under "the shadow of this rock" (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922) which implies a peaceful spiritual shelter or at least it would provide them scopes to contemplate on the lack of spirituality. The following lines mention the word "shadow":

> *(Come in under the shadow of this red rock)*
> *And I will show you something different from either*
> *Your shadow at morning striding behind you*
> *Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;*
> *I will show you fear in a handful of dust.* (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922)

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It appears the permanent shadow of the rock is different from the shadow which is a representation of temporary human life. In Eliot's (1922) religious understanding, "Fear" has its positive connotation. Weinberg (1969) argues that for Eliot, "religion and fear of hell are means to establish order rather than a deep-rooted personal fear or belief…Eliot's whole work is an attempt to reintroduce order into what seems to him a chaotic world." Then, in the poem in contrast to the poet's invitation, he cites two romantic love affairs which are devoid of divinity and sacredness (Ahmed, 2019); one is from an opera named "Tristan and Isolde" by Wilhem Richard Wagner (1813 AD-1883AD), another is of hyacinth girl. Both the love affairs end with tragic consequences. We are introduced with Madame Sosostris, a fortune teller, as the next character. Like the hyacinth lovers, Madam Sosostris is unable to recognize the symbolic significance of the Tarot cards. Eliot (1922), it appears, strongly criticizes the debasement of the Tarot pack which has spiritual connotations. This signifies that modern people lacking in spiritual vision of life has started debasing the sacred connotations of anything (Ahmed, 2019) and Madam Sosotris is representative of them. It is here depicted that crowds of people are wandering aimlessly and mechanically.

Until the end of first section, the poet has depicted the solitary individuals "lost in decaying, desolate landscape, or it has been on scraps pf conversation between people at a loss- in a café, in a room of a garden, at fortune-teller's den" (Bloom, 2007). The poet then, in the final stanza, shows us the crowd of people in the city which he calls "Unreal City" where he draws the wretched picture of moder city-dwellers. The "Unreal City", here, is London which could be representative of all modern cities of modern civilization:

> *Unreal City,*
> *A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,*
> *I had not thought death had undone so many* (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922).

The people are spiritually dead in the city. They, according to the poet, is "undone" by death implying that they are spiritually dead. There are indications that they could be compared with the damned in Dante's hell. Their sighs are "short and infrequent" and they hardly look at one another: "And each man fixed his eyes before his feet" (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922). Thus, the landscape of the London is not real; it is unreal because "its inhabitants, their lives and relations are unreal" (Mahfoud, 2009). In a hectic profit-oriented busy life, them modern people operate like machines and they have become spiritless. In the words of George (1962) "*Their vision of life does not extend beyond the immediate requirements of daily life*." Even the Church bell fails to arouse any higher calling to them, "a dead sound on the final stroke of nine" (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922). Then, there is a question of a "corpse" "That corpse you planted last year in your garden? Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?" (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922). Sufian (2014) argues, "Indeed, the corpse here represents consciousness and wisdom, which has been hidden under all these idiocies and superstitious beliefs of modern people."

The section ends with a line from Baudelaire's poem. The line reads, "O hypocrite reader, my fellow man, my brother" (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922). Jain (1991) explains that thorough this line the poet provokes the readers "to confront in [themselves] the vice of ennui or boredom, [which is] a state of profound spiritual emptiness." It appears, for the poet, it will hypocrisy to go the next section without realizing in mind what he

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has substantiated in this section: the portrayal of a waste land, an unreal city, the spiritually dead people wandering aimlessly. It as Cooper (2006) views regarding cultural anxiety in Eliot's (1915, 1922) poems:

> *Yet the sympathy we are asked to feel is not for the existential agonies of "modern man" hoping to have a heart -to -heart conversation in a world of chit-chat, but something more important than that. ... silently laments the absence of an external or historical measure or standard for human agency, a criterion embodied in institutions (such as a church, for example) that give individual identities not only metaphysical density but meaning as well.*

4.1. A Game of Chess

The crisis suffered by the people in the first section is also depicted in a different pattern in this section of the poem through the loveless and vulgar sensual lives of two couples. Both the couples belong to two different economic classes- very rich and very poor. But, in a similar way they represent the failed and disharmonious relations marked by the absence of meaningful and joyous relations in modern societies. At the beginning, we find an extremely luxurious drawing room of a very rich woman: "*The chair she sat in, like a burnished throne, / Glowed on the marble,...*" (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922). And, the part ends with the indication of the rape story of a mythological character named Philomela and the poet regrets that from her tragic story no one is taking lessons. Despite the luxuries, the rich woman sitting on the "burnished throne" does not enjoy a harmonious life and relation; rather, she is suffering from psychological disorder. Her conversations remain uncommunicated with her interlocutor who appears to be in "listless despair, a man of weak stone, lost and impotent in his response to every situation" (Bloom, 2007). Lack of communication and unsatisfied conversations are evident in the following lines:

> *"My nerves are bad tonight, Yes, bad. Stay with me*
> *"Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.*
> *"What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?*
> *"I never know what you are thinking, Think."* (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922)

The woman craves for communication. She feels devasted by her loneliness. She is a representative character of the waste land suffering from utter ennui and alienation. The woman is heedless to what she has done, what she is and will be doing: "What shall I do now? What shall I do? (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922). She expressed her continued boredom and meaninglessness saying: "With my hair down, so. What shall we do tomorrow? / What shall we ever do?" (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922) The scene shifts from the upper-class drawing room to a public pub where we see a conversation between two women often interrupted by the call "HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME" (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922). This is another portrayal of spiritually empty conjugal life and it is about Lil and Albert. Albert is coming back home after leaving the army and another woman suggests Lil that she should look smart for her husband Albert's sake. Lil's health has deteriorated due to the pills she has taken for abortion. Their sexual activity is a kind of "mechanical fertility" (Mayer, 1989). The line in the poem- "What you get married for if you don't want children?" (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922) implies the lustful relationships in the waste land and having no value for

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procreation and sacredness. It also indicates that the people in the waste land are increasingly less interested in family life which is traditionally considered as the building block of a healthy society. The last words in the scene remind us about the tragic consequences of loveless relation referring to Ophelia, a Shakespearean tragic character: "Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night" (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922).

4.2. The Fire Sermon

The title of the third section-"The Fire Sermon" – is based on Buddha's fire sermon where he preached against the fires of worldly attachments and desires. Through the obsession of worldly desires and pleasures, the characters in this section- the visitors on the bank of the Thames, the typist girl and her lover, the Thames- daughters- have metamorphosed themselves to the level of animality and are suffering from ennui. At the beginning the poet talks about the lust of the prostitutes and their rich clients who are extremely reluctant to build any sacred and permanent relationships. This has become infectious and the banks of the Thames are frequented by such people. Contrasting the depictions of characters by Spenser and Eliot on the banks of the Thames, Bloom (2007), argues, "Spenser's world is alive with nymphs, flowers, Bridal couples and glories all brought together by the poet…to celebrate meaningful marriage in a fecund world" and on the other hand, in Eliot's (1922) waste land, it is rat-like debasement: "A rat crept softly through the vegetation/ Dragging its sli my belly on the bank" (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922). The first section of *The Waste Land,* has depicted the sterility and barrenness of the modern culture and the consequent crisis in modern man.

In the second and third sections, the anxiety has been articulated more specifically. The rich but neurotic woman and Lil, the wretched wife of a soldier in the second section and the indifferent and mechanical relation between the "typist girl" and a small house agent's clerk in the third section are some stories of disharmonious and lustful relation in the modern world. They are leading life like automated machines in a world dominated by industrial market economy and impersonal machines. The poet captures such a scene in the lifestyle of the "typist girl" he introduces us with: "When the human engine waits/ Like a taxi throbbing waiting" and "*She smoothes her hair with automatic hand*" (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922). Islam (1984) asserts, "The destiny of moder man has long ceased to be under his own control. He is unthinking, unprotesting automation, thoroughly undone by death."

This section with the meeting of East and West through Buddha and St. Augustine and Eliot mentions that the "collocation of these two representatives of eastern and western asceticism, as the culmination of this part of the poem, is not an accident" (Mahfoud, 2009):

> *To Carthage then I came*
> *Burning burning burning burning*
> *O Lord thou pluckest me out*
> *O Lord thou Pluckest*
> *Burning*

The section ends with the word "burning" without having a full stop. Though the ascetic traditions have been hinted at, the fire of lust and unrestrained vulgarity in modern world has been dominant in the section.

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4.3. Death by Water

The title of the fourth section in *The Waste Land* is "Beath by Water." Among five sections of the poem, this is the briefest one. Here, trough the sudden drowning and death of a Phoenician sailor and business man has been indicated to show the impermanence of the worldly life modern people are so obsessed with. Through his death, the poet reminds the waste landers about their own death and the futility of the pursuance of worldly desires with no redemptive promises: "O you who turn the wheel and look to windward, / Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you" (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922).

4.4. What the Thunder Said

The fifth and last part of the poem is titled "What the Thunder said" implying to one Hindu spiritual anecdotes of the *Upanishad* bearing the implications to restore personal and cultural order in the society and world. The sterility and barrenness of modern culture have been also depicted here in continuation with the preceding sections. The poet's sense of anxiety has been acute here. Though there are some glimpses of hope to overcome the anxiety with reference to some spiritual anecdotes of Christianity and Hinduism, the crisis and anxiety continues to me prevalent and dominant (Ahmed, 2019). In this section, a symbolic pilgrimage by two Christian worshippers in search of the holy "grail" is narrated. The holy "grail" is traditionally considered as the cup which is associated with the holy memory of Jesus Christ. It is believed that Jesus Christ drank from this cup at the last supper and it was used to collect his blood at his crucifixion. The pilgrimage in search of holy "grail" allegorically represents the spiritual journey and here it indicates, at the same time, the spiritual blindness of the pilgrims who could not identify Christ (Jain, 1991):

> *Who is the third who always beside you?*
> *When I count, there are only you and I together*
> *But when I look ahead up the white road*
> *There is always another one walking beside you*
> *Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded* (Ferguson et al., 2005; Eliot, 1922).

Mayer (1989) argues, the third person is "the ability to see beyond the flat two dimensionality of the world of appearances and enter, through the third dimension, into a world of depth, the reality manifest to the eye of faith, whether Christina, Hindu, or Buddhist, Western or Eastern." Then, the spiritual focus has been shifted from Christianity to Hinduism referring to a fable of *Brihadaranyaka Upahishad*d. Here Prajapati (creator-God Brahma in Hindu mythology) pronounces the syllable "Da". "Da" is rendered as "Datta, Dayadhvam, and Damyata." In these three spiritual advices, human beings have been advised: "Be self- controlled! Give! Be Compassionate!" (Mahfoud, 2009) and it is apparent that human beings are being advised to practise these three commands.

Here, it appears, through the commandments, the poet realizes that the waste landers or modern people are suffering from unrestrained egotism, self-centeredness and cruelty of various forms. These are the solution to the "cultural disintegration" to recover the "sense of loss" in modern age (Mahfoud, 2009) as we find the poet mentioning in the poem: "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" (Ferguson et al., 2005; T. S.

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Eliot, 1922). Cooper (2004) opines that in Eliot's social and cultural criticism after 1922, the poet "argues for the reconstitution of an anthropologically integrated society that normative liberalism has shattered."

5. Conclusion

Throughout *The Waste Land*, the fragmentation of modern people has been depicted. The people are suffering here from loss of faith, loss of unified or coherent sense of personality, aimlessness and meaninglessness. As we have mentioned earlier through refence to Bloom (2007) that in the "stony rubbish" of modern rootlessness no healthy culture could grow or clutch. There are some salvational glimpses of religious symbols and anecdotes- the Church of Saint Mary Woolnoth, asceticism of Buddha and Saint Augustine, Grail legend, the *Upanishad* and other spiritual implications. These spiritual and cultural traditions have been providing the people with coherent vision and meaning of life. In these traditions, as we have argued earlier, people's economic, political and spiritual life remained harmoniously integrated. But, in modern world, the moral visions of these cultural traditions have declined and there is the marked absence of any standard for human agency. Davidson argues that "in *The Waste Land*, the desire for order and the surrender to the chaotic desires of life remain in tension…the continuation of a quest for order and meaning." Despite the fragmentary references to the spiritual traditions, *The Waste Land* has appeared as a poem of anxiety suffered by the modern people, particularly, in the industrialized urban spaces.

Acknowledgement

Part of this article was extracted from a doctoral thesis which is currently in preparation at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia.

Funding

This study received no funding.

Conflict of Interest

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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