International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation (IJLLT)
ISSN: 2617-0299 (Online); ISSN: 2708-0099 (Print)
DOI: 10.32996/ijllt
www.ijllt.org

Original Research Article

Depersonalization: Deconstructing Eliot's Notion in *The Waste Land*

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History
Received: June 23, 2020
Accepted: June 30, 2020
Volume: 3
Issue: 6
DOI: 10.32996/ijllt.2020.3.6.23

KEYWORDS

T. S. Eliot, The Waste Land, Depersonalization, Impersonal theory, Objective Correlative

ABSTRACT

Through a re-reading and a reassessment of Thomas Stearns Eliot's (1888–1965) masterpiece The *Waste Land* (1922), the present paper aims at recycling the poem with new polysemy. By using specific methods of the psychoanalytic approach, this study demonstrates that many details about the text and its context are marginalized if read through the objective protocols of Eliot/the New Critics. Thus, the present paper is devoted to re-reading the text subjectively to deconstruct Eliot's "impersonal theory" in catering efficiently for the author's presence. The conclusion will prove that the text is highly charged with personal tones, and consequently deviates from his theory of "Depersonalization," thereby proving an authorial presence.

Introduction

Several decades after its publication, most researchers and critics have interpreted T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) through the lens of Eliot's critical theory. As a result, different entries into the dark areas of his hidden self have been neglected. Following his model of impersonality, those critics have misread the poem, which as few later ones have revealed, is highly charged with biographical flavor. T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*'s reception, discussions, and re-readings can be divided into three major stages. The first is dominated by the New Critics and those moving in their wake. The second is a reaction against these close readings and shifting to Eliot's early philosophical writings. The third orients itself to theoretical concerns with language. Thus, the previous readings become incomplete and doubtful. Through an in-depth study of the different layers of this poem and through Eliot's critical concepts, the study will argue against his claim of "depersonalization." It intends to apply the psychoanalytic approach of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan showing how the poet is clearly reflected in his poem, and consequently highlighting the insufficiency of his "impersonal" theory and the objectivity of the New Critics to whom he belongs. The poem will be re-read in its biographical, historical context showing the indirect subjectivity of its producer and his occultation of experience hoping to keep "objective." It traces the points of intersection between the artist and his text and between the text and culture. The study will hopefully solve many of the riddles and account for the difficulties that have faced earlier readers. Far from seeing the text as the outcome of disinterested analysis of the modern world, it is seen here as the outcome of personal anxiety and cultural trauma. Sharratt (1994) in "Eliot: Modernism, Postmodernism, and After" shows that Eliot's "oeuvre" will "appear to us differently" if readers "instead of treating" the poems as due to his aesthetic of the "impersonal" perceive them as "negotiating intractable personal material which persists even in the final form" (p. 223).

Psychoanalytic Theory of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan

It is important to start with Eliot's clear, direct confession that he made in his later life about the writing of *The Waste Land*:

Various critics have done me the honour to interpret the poem in terms of criticism of the contemporary world, have considered it indeed, as an important bit of social criticism. To me it was only the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life; it is just a piece of rhythmical grumbling. (V. Eliot, 1971, p. 1)

This citation contradicts his critical doctrine of "impersonal" poetry where he states that poetry "is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality" (Eliot, 1972, p. 76). While some critics regarded *The Waste Land* as a "social criticism" of his time, Eliot himself admitted that the poem was only a relief of a "personal" grouse against life. To support such a claim, many facts in his biography should be revealed; therefore, it is suitable to quote one of the studies made on his life establishing the relationship between the work and the life: "Eliot was in love with Emily Hale. He married Vivienne Highwood. The marriage was an appalling disaster. *The Waste Land* reflects the state of mind brought on by the marriage" (Sharratt, 1994, p. 224). Accordingly, the poem can be read as an expression of his inner conflicts. In 1936, Eliot commented on Alfred Lord Tennyson's "In Memoriam" stating that "a poet by some strange accident expresses the mood of his generation, at the same time that he is expressing a mood of his own which is quite remote from that of his generation" (Eliot, 1950, p. 291). The view advanced is that Eliot had *The Waste Land* in mind when he wrote such a statement. To read the poem only "as a critique of its culture, as many have done in print at least, is to be rather simple-minded: it is to make out the mind of Europe perhaps, but to miss the poet's mind" (Moody, 1979, p. 79). Thus, the present re-reading of the poem testifies the projection of its author, which had been ignored by earlier critics who approached the poem by the philosophical writings of its author. Brooker and Bentley's (1990) reading of the poem emphasize that Eliot was aware of the states of mind:

It is beyond dispute that Eliot was preoccupied with questions about the unconscious as it affects conscious decisions and also with speculations about primal components within the unconscious. He focused on these very subjects in his graduate studies, and in the early London years he reviewed seminal books on psychology, philosophy, and sociology. (p. 221)

This state of mind takes us to the psychoanalytic approach of the poem, which rests on the theories of Sigmund Freud, who began his applications in the first decade of the twentieth century, and Jacques Lacan who expanded it. In his book *The Interpretations of Dreams*, Freud discusses the workings of the mind explaining that the "unconscious" or the "Id" is the storehouse of the buried childhood memories and repressed drives that find their way through dreams and literary works. Seen from that perspective, the literary work is the external expression of the author's unconscious mind or inner voice. It reshapes and represents his hidden thoughts, motivations, and earlier experiences into a new acceptable form, and thus fulfilling "the pleasure principle."

By linking his theory of human behavior to literary creation, Freud (1972) states that the imaginative work is "the refashioning of ready-made and familiar material" (p. 41). This material comes from an early experience in the writer's life. Thus, "the forbidden material is allowed access into conscious experience only in disguised form" (Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. 9). The disguised form is the literary work and its devices that refashion the writer's experience and emotional impulses and thus play a healing role.

However, this analogy between dreams and literary works though assisted numerous critics between 1909 and 1949, has also extended to later decades. During the 1970s, Norman Holland, in his article "The Unconscious of Literature," sums up the attitudes of critiques who psychoanalyze authors. He does not deny the role of the unconscious but shifts the focus to how authors create works that appeal to the fantasies of the reader. Interpretations are made of language as the transitional mediating terms between reader and text. Bleich (1988) proclaims that "our minds are at the root of our literary experiences. The study of art and the study of ourselves are ultimately a single enterprise," insisting on the fallacy of "objectivity" assumed by the New Critics (p. 203). Lacan extended Freud's theories of dreams and literature and the interpretation of both. His focus was shifted from the subject to "language"; it is not the subject who speaks, rather language speaks the subject.

From the vantage point of view of the Freudian psychoanalytic approach, we are given an access and insight to the mind of the producer or author. Eliot's presence in his work is manifest in the original manuscript—tinged with personal dimensions—which was published by Eliot's second wife Valeri Fletcher in 1971. James Miller (1977) suggests that Ezra Pound's slashing of many parts of the poem—reducing it by nearly half from its original length—is due to the emotional undertones which, according to Eliot's impersonal theory, "must remain painfully private" (p. 152). Miller continues to suggest that "Pound thus turned a somewhat personal, confessional poem into a public, didactic poem with the assistance of an author who was filled with uncertainties about the personal-confessional content to begin with" (p. 155). What is added here is that Pound only "tried" to turn the poem from personal to public. In his analysis of the poem, Rosenthal (1972)

observes that had Eliot kept those passages, he "would have committed himself to a much more confessional and vulnerable role in the structure of the poem" (p. 188). In another study, Gish (1988) observes:

It seems clear from the manuscript version of the poem that it originated not in a broad symbolic conception but in very immediate and personal emotion. The private memories of the narrator, his sense of human loss in the Hyacinth garden, his fear of sensuality, his inability to respond emotionally, his deep, unexplained sense of guilt are more prominent in most of the poem than the mythic pattern of death and renewal, a pattern not even carried to any resolution in the end. (p. 114)

This proves that there are "confessional" elements and those will be traced later on.

Eliot's Theory and the Objective Attitude

To elaborate the discussion, "objectivity" and "impersonality" were fostered by the New Critics as well as Eliot's antagonism to the romantic subjectivity, a negation that marks his strategy. In his essays, he fostered an anti-romantic policy, claiming its weakness and misconceptions. Yet a close reading of Wordsworth's essays seems to prove Eliot's own mis-readings. In his "Preface to Lyrical Ballads," Wordsworth (1962) states that poetry is written by "a man who . . . had also thought long and deeply" (p. 165). Unlike the emphasis, Eliot claims on the spontaneity of powerful feelings, Wordsworth marks that those emotions are recollected and transformed to fit poetry. In a general sense, both poets agree that the producer of the text is aware of his composition and therefore distanced from it.

It is therefore necessary to start with some of Eliot's critical dogmas concerning "depersonalization," which shaped the opinion of many critics of his time and disoriented their analysis away from the "personality" of the author, which is embedded in the poem. Two aspects are discussed: "depersonalization" on the part of the reader or critic and that of the author, which both lead to "objective" criticism. The first aspect involves the separation of the reader or critic's impression in evaluating a literary work. So, the value of a text lies in its fitting into the order of tradition and that the reader's aesthetic experience is the standard for measuring the value of a text. The second aspect lies in the author's extinction of his personal feelings and emotions: poetry "is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality" (Eliot, 1972, p. 76). Thus, the text is seen as existing apart from the immediate circumstances in the poet's personal life that gave rise to it. In this way, art is approached as science where the poet's mind becomes a "catalyst" and his poem is the "medium." The emotions and feelings produced are not the poem but the material for poetry, and their fusion is the poetic process that produces a new work of art. These materials experienced by the poet at the time of writing are the same ones experienced by other poets. The poet, therefore, does not create new emotions but rather filters the same emotions and feelings to form new poetry. The mind of the poet, Eliot adds, "is the shred of platinum" (Eliot, 1972, p. 74). Thus, for Eliot, poetry is not a self-expression of personal feelings but an impersonal formulation of common feelings. The text becomes an aesthetic icon, something that is divorced and self-contained, and separated from the two worlds: the personal and the popular. The poet is a continual surrender of the self, and the "progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (p. 73).

The second major principle of Eliot's critical theory, the "Objective Correlative," allows him to hide or mask his personality. Impersonal poetry, which he calls for, therefore tends to free itself from the inner voice of its author, inviting a transmutation of personal emotions and experiences. For him, poetry is not a mere collection of psychological data about the poet's inner mind. The poet, as he states, has no personality to express but "a particular medium," and thus apart from the poet's "emotion recollected in tranquility," this New Criticism/Eliottian percept entails a kind of separation. This separation he claims between artists, including himself, and the artistic work proves to be wrong, as will be clarified. It is through his skillful tactics, keenness, and cunning in handling his material that he escaped the direct presentation of personality. Speaking in the same essay of this separation taking place between the man who suffers and the man who creates seems to be paradoxical for the mind's suffering is its door to creation. Through these tools, Eliot seemed to be trying to mask his individuality.

Authorship: Intersection of Two Voices

Sean Burke criticizes the anti-authorial texts and in his book *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*, he interprets the two levels by which we as readers approach the "author": first, the methodological one in which the critical approach has an optional basis to the analysis of the text, and second, the more transcendental notion of the author as a prerequisite of all discourse. Here, it is important to state that all levels of meanings of the author overlap and are connected. The present exploration will mark such overlapping. For unlike Foucault's (1979) claim in answering "What is an Author?," in which he states that a critic's task is not to establish any ties between an author and his work, or to reconstitute an author's thought and experience through his works, this present criticism is based on the

"author." His essay, however, suggests that the "complex operation" within the text is a result of a "projection, in more or less psychologising terms," thus rendering his treatise self-contradictory (p. 150). The author controls the discourse; consequently, we cannot accept the anti-authorial statements. All utterances and texts are controlled unconsciously and consciously by an episteme, language, or any other external force related to the shaper or composer of that work. Even Barthes (1977), who deleted the authorial role, states that authors are constructed:

It is not that the Author may not 'come back' in the Text, in his text, but he then does so as a 'guest' . . . his life is no longer the origin of his fictions but a fiction contributing to his work; there is a reversion of the work on to the life (and no longer the contrary); it is the work of Proust, of Genet which allows their lives to be read as text. (p. 161)

Whatever Eliot, Barthes, and Foucault say about the "author," the concept of the author remains active for massive contradictions and disjunctions open up when reading. In his other book *Authorship: from Plato to the Postmodern,* Burke (1995) convincingly confirms the presence of the authorial subject, stating that the recent return to context in "the discourses of New Historicism, Cultural Materialism and Postcolonialism suggest(s) the restoration of a working concept of authorship if only to provide a point of access to historical, cultural and colonial contexts" (p. xxvii). The argument suggested in this study is that the author's mastery of the text cannot be distracted. The writer is involved in his creation and, in the meantime, is a product of his environment. This conception is also employed by Edward Said who believes that the study of a text should be in relation to its culture with its historical, social, and political aspects.

Extra-Textual Influences

As already noted, the present scrutiny of the text extends beyond Eliot's boundaries of the impersonal and consequently finds it appropriate to mention the extra-textual influences that shaped his mind and directed his choice. In 1915, Eliot was taking short courses in psychology and was familiar with theosophy. He got hold of Madame Blavatsky's book *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), which plays an important role in his attitude toward the occult (see Childs, 2001, pp. 93–95). He saw that theosophy, spiritualism, or psychological research would serve the moderns as an expression of finding synthesis. Therefore, his choice of Sybil's desire for death in his epigraph is a trace of his study of mental illness and hysteria, reflecting his critique of the present. While studying for his PhD, he had encountered the work of the French Symbolists who also attracted and influenced him. He was a close student of philosophy, comparative religion, Buddhism, mysticism as well as anthropology and myth in the works of James Frazer and Jessie L. Weston; hence, his understanding of these subjects is part of the context of his art.

Between 1914 and 1917, Eliot was married to a woman with emotional instability and his own career was threatened, besides the stress of abandoning his country. These, as Brooker and Bentley claim, were the lived experiences of the poem and were highlighted by the "daily catastrophes of the wars" (1990, p. 73). They add that the Tristan and Hyacinth lovers and other sufferers can be seen as a manifestation of himself.

It seems appropriate to mention that the years preceding the writing of *The Waste Land* were hard times for Eliot: the break from his family and homeland, the mental and physical illness of his wife, the frustrated marriage, leaving his job as a clerk in a bank and being short of money. Thus by processing the text in its biographical, historical context, the present reading proves the return of the author who has been extinct by Eliot's "impersonal" fallacy. His biography makes clear that the poem is his attempt, artistically, to sublimate his mental anxieties. The frustrated sexual relation, his disastrous first marriage, the theme of death, drowning, his boring career at the bank and as a lecturer, together with the many place names that he indeed visited or had relations with are major themes that pervade throughout the poem, as will be elaborated on.

Ronald Bush in his book *T. S. Eliot: a Study in Character and Style* states that the psychiatrist, Harry Trusman, did a case study of Eliot's *The Waste Land*, linking the fragmentation and raw energy to his personal pain:

he found himself empty, fragmented, and lacking in a sense of self-cohesion. … he made narcissistic fragmentation a basis for poetic form and alienation of self legitimate poetic content. The ideational and effective content of his psychic restitution, the expression of his attempt to reconstitute the fragmented elements of the split in his self became the new voice of the 'Waste Land'. (1983, pp. 68–69)

Likewise, the poem is seen as "a succession" of "feelings or 'emotions'" (Willks, 1971, p. 67). Lacan's psychoanalytic theory can be of help here. Like Freud before him, he believes that the unconscious is responsible for the subject's conscious behavior. But unlike Freud who portrays the unconscious as unstructured and disorganized, Lacan's concept of the unconscious is well-presented in his famous, often-quoted phrase "the unconscious is structured like language" (2001, p. 20).

The unconscious, he believes, is not chaotic but structured and complex like language. Thus, what he wants to prove when analyzing a literary text is that all individuals are fragmented, divided selves, and whole subject does not exist. Therefore, the fragmented structure of the poem has special significance as a producer's representation of the unconscious. Individuality therefore is acquired by language as language mirrors the individual.

Having thus identified the context of Eliot and his text, the following will focus on the personal-confessional elements that are fabricated in the matrix of the text.

Personal Confessional Elements in *The Waste Land*

Tiresias: The Single Mind

To start with, attention should be given to the original title of the poem "He Do the Police in Different Voices," which implies that the speaker is only one figure: "He" who unites all the diverse voices heard in *The Waste Land*. Accepting the assumption, one can say that the plurality of voices in different languages and styles is united in the figure of Tiresias, who is the commentator, the narrator, the speaker(s) of the dramatic monologues and therefore Eliot's spokesman. As James Miller (1977) demonstrates, the voices come from "one consciousness" and one "fragmented personality" (p. 63). Marlowe Miller (2006) suggests that Eliot adapted the traditional dramatic monologue that is presented by "one speaker" to involve "multiple voices" that are "fractured" and "incoherent" (p. 143). By renovating this particular traditional form, Eliot was capable of creating distance between himself and the speakers in the poem, and thus fulfilling his promises in "Tradition and the Individual Talent." Another opinion that supports the argument proposed in this study is made by Carol T. Christ. Christ (1986) states that Eliot's use of dramatic monologue springs from "a conviction that a poem is inevitably a personal utterance and out of a desire to give a poem the qualities of an object that transcends the condition of human speech. The poem does not resolve the tension, it contains it within the experience of the text" (p. 50). Thus, the dramatic monologue is a masking tool revealing implicitly and not explicitly personal experiences of the author.

Introduced in "The Fire Sermon," Tiresias, the classical Greek known for his insight and truth, is perceived as a representative of Eliot's own voice:

> I, Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
>
> Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see
>
> At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
>
> Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea, …
>
> I, Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs
>
> Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest-
>
> I too awaited the expected guest.
>
> He, the young man carbuncular, arrives, . . .
>
> (And I Tiresias have fore suffered all
>
> Enacted on this same divan or bed; (218–221, 228–231, 243–244)

Tiresias, as is stated in Eliot's own footnote, is the most important figure revealing the threads; the note testifies the authorial presence:

Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a 'character,' is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. … all the women are one woman and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias *sees*, in fact, is the substance of the poem. (p. 78)

By placing inverted commas round "character," Eliot differentiates between a "character" and a "personage." The word "personage" has a more comprehensive and more indicative meaning than "character." Tiresias is being used as a vehicle for transforming ideas, feelings, and perceptions. Few characters are employed**,** either present or recalled, all of whom are united in the figure of Tiresias, as Eliot plainly says. However, it is through his personae that the psyche of the author is

revealed. Tiresias' statement that he "fore suffered all" testifies that he is the speaker of Eliot's mind, he who had experienced and suffered all this before. The poem, as Sigg (2007) demonstrates, contains:

a multitude of voices and characters, yet retaining the recognizable presence of its author. *The Waste Land* portrays Eliot's singular interests and emotions, yet filters them through diverse characters, incidents, and allusions quite distinguishable from him. . . . the voice in *The Waste Land* belongs to the poem's author, from whom the voice is partly distinct but with whom it is also partly identical. (p. 220)

Poetry, therefore, becomes unconsciously an "emotion recollected" in despairing intensity and not an "escape of emotion."

Men–Women Relationship

The relationship between men and women is a major topic that echoes throughout the matrix of the poem. This relation is not intimate but a rather sterile and meaningless one in which the couples are portrayed as estranged, emotionally distant, and indifferent to each other. In fact, this relation can be interpreted as a reflection of Eliot's traumatic time in his wrecked marriage to the Englishwoman Vivienne Highwood whom he married in 1915. Their marriage was not prosperous: she was mentally ill and died in 1947 in an asylum after being hospitalized for nine years. The poem was largely completed during a period of mental stress and convalescence from breakdown when he stayed for some time in a Swiss Sanatorium in Geneva in 1921, a year before *The Waste Land* was published. Eliot, as we know from his letters, was granted three-months leave from the bank. He spent this leave with Vivienne in Margate, and then alone in Lausanne where he composed a large part of the poem "In the mountains" where "there you feel free" (1. 17). The poem is viewed as a catharsis, a way of releasing his frustration and stress that had led to his breakdown, or, in Roger D. Sell's words, it was "therapeutic" (1993, p. 150). Eliot explains his sudden marriage to Vivienne: "I believe that I came to persuade myself that I was in love with her simply because I wanted to burn my boats and commit myself to staying in England" (V. Eliot, 1988, p. xvii). He recognized that his future as a writer lay in England and subsequently settled there. He continues, saying that the marriage "brought no happiness" to her while to him "it brought the state of mind out of which came *The Waste Land*" (V. Eliot, 1988, p. xvii).

Digging out personal details starts in the first part "Burial of the Dead," which alludes to the love story in Richard Wagner's opera *Tristan and Isolde* followed by the romantic episode of the hyacinth girl with her lover: "You gave me hyacinths first a year ago; / They called me the hyacinth girl" (35–36). This memory stands for his first meeting with Vivienne, his first wife, when their relation was at its beginning. Love dominates their relation, as indicated in their intimate conversation and nostalgic tone. It might also refer to his love for Emily Hale, one of his oldest American friends. This state of pure feeling has passed, as the speaker sadly recalls the actuality: ". . . I could not / speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither / living nor dead, and I knew nothing" (38–40). The expression "I knew nothing" suggests that in the present she "knows" something which is their failure. Besides, his connotative meaning is the unsuccessful relation, the failure, and disappointment. However, the nostalgia referred to earlier is not only confined to personal matters but extends to a wider extent: to the vanished Austro-Hungarian Empire implied by the word "archduke" at the outset of "The Burial of the Dead":

> 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. (13–18)

Here, Eliot draws the reader's attention to a crucial moment in history: the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand, which caused the First World War. This symbol of a dying civilization leads Marie to "hold on tight" lest she falls. Eliot is very clever in reversing the roles by letting the girl speak his experience on his behalf, using her as an objective correlative to extract his subjective individuality and keep his passion away.

The poet/speaker refers to the same happy moments in "The Fire Sermon" when saying "Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song" (177). This allusion to Edmund Spenser's marriage song, *Prothalamion* (1596), can be read as a reference to the memory of their marriage when they were unaware of the coming life. On July 2, 1915, after his marriage, Eliot wrote to his brother Henry Ware Eliot informing him of the state of their marriage: "I feel more alive than I ever have before," indicating

the peaceful mind before recognizing the bleak future (V. Eliot, 1988, p. 105). Oscillation of his mood can be seen in this section that opens with a sad tone upon realizing the failure of marriage, as indicated in words like "sink," "departed," "end," and "wept."

Besides, negotiating the emotional dilemma invites exploration into biographical details and background that reveal personal "confession" in the second section of the poem "A Game of Chess," which includes many references to women being victims to the men's lust and deceit. Unlike most parts of the poem which are set outdoors, this section takes place indoors, symbolizing the poet's own psyche. This part introduces an emotional tension in the communication between male and female figures that is vividly evident in the following dialogue:

'My nerves are bad to-night. 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.'

I think we are in rat's alley

Where the dead men lost their bones.

'What is that noise?'

The wind under the door.

'What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?'

Nothing again, nothing.

'Do

'You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember

'Nothing?'

I remember

Those are pearls that were his eyes.

'Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?' (111–127).

The previous conversation gives the impression that both speakers are bored, estranged, imprisoned, and emotionally apart for while she raises questions incoherently, he answers her in fragmented thoughts to keep her away from him. The only thing he can remember is "the pearls that were his eyes," which refers to a male beloved friend. Her plea to him to stay with her implies that he is used to avoiding her, and as Blistein claims, his silence "indicates that he has already in effect abandoned her" (2008, p. 174). He also sees this lady as a mirror of Eliot's first wife, suggesting that:

Eliot thought of separating from Vivienne long before he did so. The facts of their separation, which occurred ten years after publication of TWL, resemble events in the poem. Eliot deserted Vivienne without warning after a voyage to America. Thereafter he refused to see his wife—although she desperately wanted to see him. (p. 175)

After their separation, Eliot refused to see her and, according to Robert Sencourt, she revenged by attending his lectures wearing a placard that read "I am the wife he abandoned" (1973, p. 173). Moreover, the woman's speech is enclosed between two quotation marks while his is stated directly, which highlights her hysterical neurotic speech to which the poet

draws attention. Her hysterical case is slightly hinted at: “Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair / Spread out in fiery points / Glowed into words, then would be savagely still” (2, 109–111). Their passion becomes sterile, dry, and destructive. The passage presumably suggests Eliot's wife during her illness. In contrast to the romantic passion of the lovers in the first part, the couples/Eliot’s feel alone albeit they are together. *The Waste Land* emphasizes the sense of entrapment, starting with the epigraph till the very last line.

Psychoanalytically, the disordered speech of the text when looked at from a Freudian perspective is symptomatic of underlying sexual disorder. Freud (1972) believes that “repressed wishes . . . are only allowed to come to expression in a very distorted form” (p. 39). The pressure of such impulses creates neurotic symptoms. As many critics demonstrate, Eliot was suffering sexual incapacity, which is evident even in his early poems. For example, in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” Eliot/the speaker is shown to be a sexless old man who cannot approach the woman he meets: “Should I, after tea and cakes and ices, / Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis? . . . And in short, I was afraid” (79–80, 86). He even fears the woman's response who “Should say: ‘That is not what I meant at all. / That is not it, at all.’” (97–98).

Lil’s story is another portrait of a lady delineating Eliot’s failure with his wife in the years of her sickness. In a letter to Aiken, Eliot refers to Vivienne as “having incidental troubles like teeth which set her back,” which is similar to Lil’s episode (V. Eliot, 1988, 143). The description shows that Lil, though only thirty-one, is sick, pale, has missing teeth, and looks “so antique” because of the contraceptive “pills” she takes to prevent her having children. Birth control was a major topic of debate and concern in 1921 and had its influence on Eliot. The debate ended with advocating contraception, and two clinics were opened in the same year (Selby, 1999, p. 122). These details render the social tone of the people who took these pills, and these demonstrative examples reveal the social divisions and horrific hostility. The sterility and meaninglessness horrifies the speaker.

In “The Fire Sermon,” Tiresias/Eliot, who hovers between male and female roles, narrates a loveless scene from a female point of view: “And I Tiresias have fore suffered all / Enacted on this same divan or bed;” (243–244). The boredom of this relation is felt by the typist with whom Tiresias identifies. Words like “he, the young man carbuncular,” “clerk,” “fore suffered,” and “enacted” verify unconsciously the presence of the poet in his poem. The choice of the word “clerk” springs from his work as a bank clerk for Lloyd's Bank in 1917.

Place Names

Eliot's arrival in England at the early age of twenty-five allowed him to watch from a distance the old world, England, crumble. As an outsider with a particular interest in history and place, he composed his poem with many place names rich in personal and historical suggestions. However, many of the place names mentioned have a kind of relation to him. For example, in the first section of part one, “Starnbergersee” is a lake near Munich that had a resort that Eliot visited in 1911, during his academic year in Paris. Also, in line ten of the same section, “Hofgarten” is a park in Munich that Eliot might have visited. In the introduction to his book *The Making of an American Poet*, Miller mentioned that when he was invited to teach American literature at the Sorbonne in Paris, he walked and visited many places that Eliot had once stayed in and arrived at gardens that included many kinds of flowers such as “lilacs” and “hyacinths,” words that were mentioned in *The Waste Land*. The sounds heard in this land resonate of places; “Mary Woolnoth” echoes the sound of London to Eliot's ears. References are also made to Greenwich, Richmond, Highbury, and Kew, which all are rich in historical suggestions.

However, in the third canto the poet says:

> Under the brown fog of a winter noon
>
> Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant
>
> Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants
>
> C.i.f. London: documents at sight,
>
> Asked me in demotic French
>
> To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel
>
> Followed by a weekend at the Metropole. (209–215)

"Smyrna" is now the city of Izmir in Turkey. B. C. Southam (1968) emphasizes that "the events described here actually happened. Years later, Eliot told an inquirer that he had in fact received such an invitation from an unshaven man from Smyrna with currants in his pockets" (p. 82). "Moorgate," which is mentioned in line 297, is a slum in the east of London. According to Southam, Eliot "used Moorgate underground railway station when he was working at Lloyds Bank" (p. 86). In the same section, the poet says "By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept" (3, 182). In fact, Leman is the old name for Lake Geneva and it is in 1921, a year before *The Waste Land* was published that Eliot sought psychological treatment near a lake in Lausanne. In the same section, the poet says: "On Margate Sands/I can connect/Nothing with nothing" (3, 301–302). Eliot spent some time in a "nice tiny hotel" in Margate before he went to Lausanne in Switzerland (V. Eliot, 1988, p. 481). Receiving catastrophic news that he had a nervous breakdown, the poet "wept" and "made no comment" and consequently could connect "Nothing with nothing." As a result of this nervous "event," he started cutting his "fingernails of dirty hands."

Death and Drowning

Death**,** another theme prevailing in the poem, can be interpreted autobiographically as a result of the death of Eliot's friend Jean Verdenal, in World War 1 in 1915, and his of father of heart attack in 1919, as well as the War that also witnessed the death of about 20 million people, both military and civilian. Similarly, the image of death especially by drowning dominates *The Waste Land,* as the title of the fourth section sums up. Verdenal, as Miller points out, died on the shores of Gallipoli during World War I. He "was cited for bravery in evacuating the wounded by sea on 30 April 1915" (2007, p. 69). Verdenal "who was once handsome and tall as you" is "a fortnight dead." As a result of his death in "entering the whirlpool," he "forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell" (4, 314). This, however, might be the reason for describing April as "the cruelest month." It was also on "April" 6, 1917, that America declared war on Germany. The loss of the grand ship, the Titanic, in April 1912 may be one of the reasons for his choice of drowning as a central theme as well as describing "April" as the cruelest month.

"The Burial of the Dead" includes a warning to "Fear death by water" when Madam Sosostris reads her tarot cards. The first card she introduces is "the drowned Phoenician sailor," which, she says, "is your card." At the end of "A Game of Chess," Lil's valediction reminds us of Ophelia's departing words in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* before her death by water: "Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night" (172). "The Fire Sermon" opens with a reference to "river(s)" associated with words like "sink," "departed," "end my song," "wreck," and "my father's death," which all suggest drowning.

Unlike the previous sections in which water is clearly a destroyer, it is only in part five of "What the Thunder Said" that water is desired when the poet/speaker yearns for water or even "the sound of water":

If there were water

And no rock

If there were rock

And also water

And water

A spring

A pool among the rock

If there were the sound of water only

Not the cicada

And dry grass singing

But sound of water over a rock

Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees

Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop

But there is no water (5, 346–359)

"Water" here stands for hope; hope of leading a happy, healthy marital life that is made impossible, as implied by the repetition of the conjunction "if."

Conclusion

The above analysis reveals the hidden inner self of the poet, which resembles the details in the poem defeating Eliot's "impersonal theory." It is through myth, allusion, and dramatic monologue, all used as objective correlatives, that Eliot simultaneously describes personal suffering and renders it external and therefore impersonal. Eliot succeeds in finding objective expression for the purely subjective. By fusing the personal with the mythic, Eliot is capable of a "continual self-sacrifice," masking his experience in his personae. The voices in *The Waste Land* are thus "both past and present, both personal and universal, both autobiographical and historical . . . a poem both richly historical and painfully autobiographical" (Longenbach, 2007, p. 139). Elizabeth Drew (1949) mentions that in his memorial lecture on Yeats, "Eliot observes that the great poet is the man who out of intense and personal experience is able to express a general truth: retaining all the particularity of his experience to make it a general symbol." (p. 66). Blistein's book demonstrates that through a comprehensive analysis of Eliot's sources in the poem, Eliot finds in myth a transmutation of the personal to the impersonal. Randall Jarrell wonders in his essay "Fifty Years of American Poetry" that the poem is highly personal:

Did you actually believe that all those things about objective correlatives, classicism, the tradition, applied to *his* poetry? Surely you must have seen that he was one of the most subjective and daemonic poets who ever lived, … From a psychoanalytical point of view, he was far and away the most interesting poet of your century. (1969, pp. 314–315)

The view advanced proves the impossibility of detaching the poet from his text. Eliot himself admits that:

when I wrote a poem called *The Waste Land* some of the more approving critics said I had expressed 'the disillusionment of a generation', which is nonsense. I may have expressed for them their own illusion of being disillusioned, but that did not form part of my intention. (Cox & Hinchliffe, 1968, p. 26)

What his intention was is something nobody knows for sure. His statement: "that did not form part of my intention" is debatable. For if it did not express "the disillusionment of a generation," it would have expressed the disillusionment of the "individual"; his private life that he tried in vain to keep private. The fragmentary, disconnected feature of the text is a representative of the fragmentary troubled mind of its author. The division is both inward and outward.

Though Eliot struggled to avoid the spontaneous reactions of his mind and the oscillation between art and personality, we are given an access to his mind from his own point of view, which in turn reflects his personality demonstrating the gap between his theories and poetry. His critical essays obscured the critical history of the poem in the first half of the century, which deflected critics from seeing the author's personal implication. The claim of "depersonalization" initiated by Eliot and finally carried by Barthes as well as many recent critics proves to be unsatisfactory for "everywhere, under the auspices of its absence, the concept of the author remains active, the notion of the return of the author being simply a belated recognition of this critical blindness" (Burke, 1998, p. 173). The intention of the author comes back to occupy a main position in interpreting *The Waste Land,* and thus this study deconstructs Eliot's theory of "depersonalization." The study introduces a new area of investigation for future research, wherein the following questions might be asked: what new textual interpretations will result if researchers read Eliot's letters to Emily Hale that were deposited in Princeton University Library in 1956 and were made available for research in January 2020?; why are women referred to through their hair rather than their faces?; and can the distorted figures in the text be studied under disability theories?

Conflict of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest to declare.

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