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Not a Waste Land?: A Freudo-Nietzschean Reinterpretation of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*

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Abstract:

This paper aims to offer a reinterpretation of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. The author in this paper studies Eliot's own takes on religion, morality, history and juxtaposes it with the understandings of German thinker Nietzsche. The author shows how these two thinkers belonging to two different philosophical positions, address a similar kind of moral stagnancy that limits the possibilities of modernity by redirecting its vector within the quagmire of a historical stasis. The author uses Freud's theories to understand how within the semiotic body of the text the vector of free will interacts with this historical stasis. *The Waste Land* has been mainly interpreted as Eliot's reaction to a morally corrupt post-war generation. However, through this study the author attempts to offer a reinterpretation of the text beyond the existing hegemonic epistemologies in the domain of Eliot studies and contends to argue that *The Waste Land* hints towards an alternative form of morality and thus provides a completely new understanding of the text.

Keywords: Eliot, *The Waste Land*, Freud, Nietzsche, Morality

Introduction

One of the key pioneers of the modernist movement in literature, T.S. Eliot brought the spontaneous current of poetic consciousness away from the mystic Romantic stream into a mysterious confluence of thoughts where no singular direction can be comprehended in complete isolation, from the standpoint of conventional knowledge system. It is perhaps because of this confluence of diverse thoughts fidgeting across different time and spaces, Eliot's poetry appears to be almost incomprehensible, or even chaotic, or as Eliot's Italian critic Carlo Linati commented, "irrational, incomprehensible….a magnificent puzzle" (as

cited in Singh, 2024, p. 165). Yet, from within that very chaos, waves of tranquil meaning emerge, waves that drift itself gently across the landscape of modern consciousness.

Ever since the publication of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* in October 1922 in the *Criterion*, the long poem has garnered the interest of scholars across the globe. Gabriel McIntire notes in *The Cambridge Companion to The Waste Land* that Eliot "metacritically commented on the hermeneutics of dialogic … exchanges" (McIntire, 2015, p. 3), a remark reflecting on the poet's very extensive practice of incorporating the writings of other writers within the annihilating fold of *The Waste Land.* Thinking logically, such intertextual borrowing can never be treated as something that is purely ornamental and superficial; rather, it hints at Eliot's deeper modernist ambition to "grasp and deploy new mappings of the psyche" (McIntire, 2015, p. 3). In doing this, Eliot beautifully aligns poetic form with contemporary psychological as well as epistemological frameworks. But, it's a fact that current understanding of human psychology is still evolving as a discourse. Interestingly, such instability is also crucial to the reader's experience of this particular poem. Allyson Booth observes, *The Waste Land* "is designed so that its readers never feel completely sure about themselves" (Booth, 2015, p. 1). In a striking fashion, Booth's remark equates with a haunting uncertainty present in the poem, the sense of uncertainty experienced by a multi-track mind failing to comprehend its own existence as a unified and coherent whole. But, at large, what remained hitherto constant in a rather changing domain of literary studies is the epistemic base of the canonical interpretations of the poem. The poem has been vastly interpreted as Eliot's reaction to a debauched modern existence that has lost its spiritual connection and become utterly disillusioned, or as an expression of the generation that succeeded to the legacy of World War I or more emphatically interpreted as "disillusionment of a generation." But, Eliot himself refuted this idea in *Thoughts After Lambeth*:

> When I wrote a poem called *The Waste Land* some of the most approving critics said that I have 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. (Eliot, 1931)

Yet, the apparent incoherence of the poem is so conducive and annihilating that it would fit into any superstructure of narratives one may build to bridge the seemingly unbridgeable gulf between an enveloping nothingness and a plausible explanation. Having said that, I contend to argue that at the heart of the poem lies a timeless tension between the physical existence and the abstract presence of moral superstructures, often premised on religious orders that are constantly supervising the human consciousness, a conflict that restricts the human will from a limitless possibility of an empirical understanding of the world beyond the familiar and its permutable abstractions. The presence of these dominant moral superstructures restrict the vector of will within the ambit of a circular, non-progressive quagmire of history that offers no real progressive journey into the future because the rigidity of the moral discourses associated with history is overwhelmingly constraining. This constraining nature of history is implied in Eliot's poem in the form of allusions, reference of past events that are always observed from a certain moral order.

Poetry as Quest in Eliot's World

Every creative process is a quest and poetry is not an exception. However, to undertake this quest means travelling through a semantic network of language. The signifiers of this language may be familiar, but it must transcend that, more particularly in Eliot's world, it must rise beyond into a space where familiar words are freed from fixed meanings or, even into a state of aporia where the quest for the meaningful can even be suspended. Eliot noted in his essay 'The Three Voices of Poetry":

> (The Poet) has something germinating in him for which he must find words…and when the words are finally arranged in the right way…he may experience a moment of exhaustion, of appeasement, of absolution, and of something very near annihilation, which is in itself indescribable. And then he can say to the poem: "Go away! Find a place for yourself in a book-and don't expect me to take any further interest in you. (Eliot, 1957, pp. 97-98)

In his own quest for meaning transcending the text, to meet the taste of the modern readers and the complexity and the indirectness it demands, Eliot has left a rich oeuvre of poetry which is perpetually mothering new meanings across different time and spaces through silence, through chaos or even through a chiaroscuro of semi-meaningful, semi-meaninglessness. Eliot wrote in his essay "The Metaphysical Poets":

> Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning. (Eliot, 2015, p. 399)

However, Eliot's own use of the word 'comprehensive' here is loaded. Eliot doesn't intend to mean 'understandable' by the word 'comprehensive', but rather, he perhaps emphasizes that poet must be capable of comprehending the complex and diverse modern experiences at once by making it more allusive, placing it at the crossroad of different experiences, subverting the hegemony of the existing syntax, or perhaps transplanting words from the vocabulary of other languages on the semiotic body of the text 'etherized on a table' at a language laboratory.

In this search for a linguistic expression there lies, somewhere, a necessity of taking refuge in the history of a past. Yet, the very moment the poet captures his experience in words, he simultaneously bids farewell to it. The poet's lack of further 'interest' in the poem actually indicates that the poem is, in fine, a part of a creative quest, a mere linguistic expression of another historical process which is in continuity with a history that precedes it, but never a repetition of a historical stasis, but a repetition of unresolved tensions buried deep in the Unconscious, a certain kind of repetition that Freud talked about in his seminal work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, to help it bind with existing narratives in order to achieve quiescence and accept what Eliot defines as modern with respect to his time. Modernity in Eliot's world is not elusive, but fluid, constantly redefining itself through a dialectical opposition between present and static residue of the past, often misinterpreted as indefeasible order of morality. In Eliot's world of poetry, the possibilities of meaning hitherto unknown springs perhaps from a desire to explain a savvied meaninglessness within the gamut of existing meaning with respect to the changing time or, from a desire to transcend the order of history itself that decides the meaning of this 'meaninglessness'.

Eliot's Nietzsche: History, Creativity, and the Problem of Originality

In his one of the early works *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History*, German philosopher Nietzsche radically criticized modernity's oversaturation or fetishisation of the past because he saw it as a weakness:

> The critic without need, the antiquarian without reverence, and the authority on — greatness with no capacity to be great, are such growths—plants that have run wild and, torn from their nurturing soil, have therefore degenerated into weeds. (Nietzsche, 1986, p. 19)

Critic Rosenhagen notes, "For Nietzsche, there was use for a historical consciousness, but never in excess: that…the past becomes a gravedigger that buries the present alive" (Ratner-Rosenhagen, 2022). In a surprisingly similar fashion, albeit in a less radical tone, Eliot writes in "The Tradition and the Individual Talent": "The poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past and that he should continue to develop his consciousness throughout his career" (Eliot, 2015, p. 296). Eliot did not discard the presentness of the past, rather he sees present as the continuation of the past, but advocates for the widening of the horizon of the consciousness and what perhaps remains implied is the necessity to transcend the old moral orders associated with the past that also shelter many dogmatic mandates and the immediacy of its reconstruction and subsequent repurposing in order to impose modern rhetoric and its fluidity into its fabric. Eliot was conscious of the fact that only a very few people in his time were aware of the intellectual tradition of the Church and accepted theology as an intellectual discipline. But, Eliot was very critical about the shallow/ pseudo-intellectual tradition that was more fashionable at his time. He mentioned very poignantly in *Thoughts After Lambeth,* "…anyone who has been moving among intellectual circles and comes to the Church, may experience an odd and rather exhilarating feeling of isolation" (Eliot, 1931). The point here is that Eliot felt the need of intellectualisation of religion in true sense such that it answers questions rather than being imposing in nature. As a poet Eliot valued creativity and any dogmatic and imposing order is bound to act as a hindrance to someone who is in a creative quest. In a very ironic tone, Eliot perhaps addressed this dogmatism, quite helplessly, through the image of a patient etherized on table in the *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.* The urgency of walking with the self's other explained in the very first line of the poem abruptly ends in being immovable like a patient. But what is this patient suffering from? I argue that it the dilemma born out his interaction with the historical stasis and the position of the Church as an imposing authority.

John Zilcosky in his essay *Modern Monuments: T.S. Eliot, Nietzsche, and the Problem of History* argued, "…both (Nietzsche and Eliot) circle around same dilemma: how to break out of a contemporary crisis of creativity and locate a space for originality within tradition" (Zilcosky, 2005, pp. 22–23). *The Waste Land* brilliantly captures this dilemma through a paradox. It explains the present through allusions to the past while attempting a continuous self-abnegation.

***The Waste Land*: A New Hermeneutics of Morality**

At the very outset, what draws our attention is the very title of the first section of *The Wasteland* : "The Burial of the Dead." This section can never simply be considered a mere exposition of what the poem holds in her womb. The title shelters the reference to the burial of a dead body, or the committal service in honour of the dead. But whose death, or whose burial, is the poet really talking about? This haunting questing immediately invites the readers to remind that at the very outset of the poem, he nullifies the religious romanticism often associated with April and so famously canonised by Chaucer in the "Prologue" to *The Canterbury Tales*. This subversion of conventional descriptions of spring as a season of joy in the opening lines of the poem is very emblematic. In contrast to Chaucer, Eliot writes:

> April is the cruelest month, breeding
> Lilacs out of the dead lands, mixing
> Memory and desire, stirring
> Dull roots with spring rain. (Eliot, 2001, p. 5)

To put it differently, this rejection of the Chaucerian cheerfulness in these lines presents a sense of gloom and at the same time does suggest a sense of negation, a negation of the pastness of the past, unlike the presentness of the past that Eliot talked about in his essay, 'The Tradition and the Individual Talent'. It denies a regression into the stagnant quagmire of history, expressed through the metonym of April. April in Eliot's poem is evoked with strong pessimism. However, with the rejuvenation of the 'dull roots' that symbolically refers to a timely recurrence of the past orders, the possibilities of interpreting the trauma that this past carries is also aptly conveyed. The unprocessed psychic stimulations are referred to in these lines as a brew of memory and desires. In other words, within the semiotic body of the text through repetitions Eliot gave enough chances to the unprocessed stimulations and the unresolved tensions associated with it to get bind with the modern narratives of human experiences. Freud noted in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, "…the ego also attempts to put an end to the alien and isolate status of the symptom, by exploiting every possible opportunity to bind it to itself in some way" (Freud, 2003). The timeless recurrence of the past orders in the semiotic body of the text is ego's attempt to appropriate the tensions hinged with the historical stasis and ensure the pleasure principle itself.

Chaucer's "Prologue" very famously opens with April's soothing and rejuvenating power which is invariably linked to the reawakening of spiritual sentiment:

> When April with its sweet-smelling showers
> Has pierced the drought of March to the root
> …..
> Then folk long to go on pilgrimages. (Chaucer, n.d.)

However, Eliot, on the contrary, very carefully refers to such reawakening. Reawakening of any sentiment or thought is always tied, by an invisible thread, to the flow of a series of events in the past, with the moral, religious and social values embedded in that past. Eliot,

rather, accepts the subjective presence of the past, but attempts to reinterpret it, or positions the past in the matrix of presence in such a manner that it calls for reinterpretations. Therefore, past or historical sense in Eliot's universe is like a reference that could be cited while writing the present. Chaucer is thus used as a 'reference' in order to reinterpret it. Gareth Reeves while discussing Eliot's historical sense, mentions that Eliot's understanding of history owes much to his understanding of F.H. Bradley. Reeves notes:

> Eliot's Bradleyan epistemology informs his idea of tradition: if 'lived truths' being 'partial', have to be constantly 'reinterpreted' and seen in the context of other times, so do works of art. But, in the process of reinterpretation the very context changes. (Reeves, 2015, p. 109)

Consequently, the inversion of Chaucer at the very beginning thus questions the absolutism of the past orders and indicates that its legitimacy depends on how it is reinterpreted within new historical and cultural context. By offering a scope for reinterpretation, Eliot makes room for an alternative morality which will eventually validate the modern experiences, experiences that could easily be cast as immoral by old moral orders and as Reeves observes, somehow it is bound to happen as the context changes not solely because of the reinterpretation, but also because of the fluidity of semiotic signs in a language itself and its arbitrariness in the semiotic universe. George Danis observed:

> Eliot's world consequently offers an alternative morality that is not bound by allegiance to a particular god nor rewarded by good faith; in this sense the waste land is a world beyond good and evil. (Danis, n.d.)

To heighten the sense of apparent gloom in the subsequent lines that follow, Eliot has portrayed a rather godless universe:

> And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
> And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
> There is shadow under this red rock,
> (Come in under the shadow of this red rock). (Eliot, 2001, p. 5)

While explaining the symbol of the red rock in these lines Dr. Manju Jain, an eminent Eliot scholar, writes, "In *The Waste Land* there is no solace in the shadow of the rock; there is only terrifying reminder of our mortality" (Jain, 2014, p. 155). The red rock is unarguably a clear reference to Christ who has deserted the waste land and the self is placed in a restless ambivalence: whether to take refuge under the shadow of God or to deny any possibility of salvation and keep trading the path that invariably assures eternal damnation. This overpowering fear of loss, this sense of self-abjection from an already accepted construction of a strong security leads the human will to an enveloping moral dilemma.

Similarly, Shibnarayan Ray in his Bengali essay on Nietzsche observes that in a Nietzschean world every concept of morality is merely superimposed, extremely fragile and always relative (Ray, 2019, p. 25). However, Nietzsche's take on morality springs from his antipathy towards religion and God. Nietzschean world is a space that is free from the raging of these imposed structures of moral obligations. In his work, *The Gay Science* Nietzsche proclaimed the death of God: "God is dead" (Nietzsche, 1974, p. 279). Ray observes, "According to Nietzsche, religion displeases human beings since it aims at staving off change, sedates the desire from questioning and by generating a form of fear and greed restricts the self to a form of neonatal nonage" (Ray, 2019, p. 26; translation mine). According to Lee Spinks, "The moral idea of 'man' we know today, Nietzsche conjectures, may in fact be an ad hoc development of various historical practices rather than the inevitable

outcome of our moral progress" (Spinks, 2003). The historical practices that Spinks highlights here are those structures that are superimposed, structures that could be parenthetically cited within the body of the present, not necessarily to endorse them, but always as references. Nietzsche believed that those who are strong enough in the organization or society establish the authority of religion on the basis of various policies and practices. They reinforce the idea of slavery in the minds of those who are weak and cunningly force them to transform the inner angst into a form of self-loathing and insurmountable sin. However, though Nietzsche discarded all forms of religion, his main target was Christianity. According to Nietzsche Christianity was born out of a desire to preach a slave morality. Nietzsche wrote in *The Twilight of the Idols*, "It (Christianity) has depraved the reason even of the intellectually strongest natures by teaching men to feel the supreme values of intellectuality as sinful, as misleading, as *temptations*" (Nietzsche, 1990, p. 129). The ideals of religious morality preach ordinary men and women to surrender to the powerful. Eliot and Nietzsche were both critical of modernity. Spinks notes:

> Where Nietzsche differs profoundly from Eliot, of course, is in the solution he proposes to our unhappy modern state. We should not, in Nietzsche's view, look for answers to the problems of modern life in a resurgent Christian moralism; the subordination of life to a moral law based upon humility and the interests of the weak was, for Nietzsche, precisely what robbed classical culture of its vital force. (Spinks, 2003)

However, what can be argued from Eliot's remarks in *Thoughts After Lambeth* is that it is not what Spinks thinks Eliot advised as absolution to the problems of modernity, the resurgence of Christian moralism, but the ability of man to question it, treat it as a matter that can be intelectualised. The ability to intellectualise ensures the ceaseless flow of creativity.

In other words, what can be deciphered from this understanding is that human will cannot remain fixed at a definite point rather; it remains perennially in a state of flux. Nietzsche also emphasized on the ceaseless flow of the will. But, rigid orders, especially the religious doctrines through its ideological apparatuses, interpellate the human beings into such subjects that are always forced to maintain constancy or, restrict the will within those constructions that secure this constancy in such a way that it is always in want of something static, something more secured than being in flux. But, for majority of the people this sense of security is more desirable over constant questioning and therefore, the urgency of further experiences in order to arrive to an alternative form of Truth hence becomes redundant. Therefore, the human consciousness is always in want of establishing something static over the ceaseless flow the will and holds on to the constructions of God, abstract speculations, indefeasible laws, more institutionalised forms of authority. The month of April memorialised through religious and moral historiographies is a passive reminder of such constructions that inevitably limits any possibility of progress and therefore, repudiates and eliminates any scope for a further empirical understanding of the world. Eliot's rejection of Chaucerian romanticism is a revolt against these historiographies that only endorse homogenized human experiences, ratified by religion or old moral discourses.

In the concluding part of *The Burial of the Dead* Eliot refers to the burial of a certain dead body:

> "That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
> "Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
> "Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?

"Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,
"Or with his nails he'll dig it up again. (Eliot, 2001, p. 5)

Apparently, this burial of the corpse may be seen as a reference to the ancient custom of burying the effigies of fertility gods in the fields. Jain has interpreted the "corpse" as "a buried memory, or the buried life of the self" (Jain, 2014, p. 163). I would like to argue here that the figurative plantation of the "corpse" actually hints at the willful burial of the dead God in Nietzsche, a burial that ensures no resurrection. Nietzsche's God is actually an interpretable trauma that is generally never taken to the clinic out of fear of blasphemy. In *The Waste Land* God is not directly mentioned, but remains an undercurrent. The question of blasphemy is very safely invalidated. However, the Dog and its potential ability to dig up what has been already buried and referred to in these lines aptly resonates with the natural tendency of the hegemonic structures that hinder the ceaseless functioning of the will and therefore forces it to hold on to the old values and moral systems associated with a certain history, without questioning it, reinterpreting it, intellectualizing it. *The Waste Land* therefore willfully rejects the valorisation of a past that fails to make room for the present.

One of the underlying themes of *The Waste Land* may be stated as sexual disorder and religious unbelief. Interestingly, according to a popular legend, it is the Fisher King whose habit of philandering renders him a wound and makes him impotent and his kingdom a wasteland. This legend is detailed in Jessie Weston's cult book *From Ritual to Romance*. Eliot acknowledges his indebtedness to Weston in the *notes*. Sexual and religious conflict indeed dominate the poem. The references of the sexual encounters between Tereus and Philomel, Belladonna and the woman in the pub, the typist and the young man carbuncular apparently point to the inadequacy of the sexual relations. But, there is a specific instance in *The Fire Sermon* that offers an alternative view of life:

The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights
Her stove, and lays out food in tins.
Out of the window perilously spread
Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,
On the divan are piled (at night her bed)
Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays. (Eliot, 2001, p. 13)

The typist girl referred to in the aforesaid lines is someone who is conscious of her own desires and she fulfills that in possible ways. Apparently, one may say that Eliot may be stylistically referring to a certain shamelessness or promiscuity or meaningless sexual encounters through the image of the typist girl. Her stockings are visible from outside as they are piled on the divan. Perhaps, she willfully publics what in otherworldly parlance is essentially private and therefore she denies to be judged by the external superstructures. This willful rejection of the moral policing is *juxtaposed* with the moral policing by blind Tiresias. Even though blind, Tiresias can see everything, feel everything. Harriet Davidson commented, "What Tiresias sees is a Dantesque inferno of sexual misrule" (Davidson, 1998). I contend to argue that Eliot uses the blindness of Tiresias as a metaphor in the text. What he actually seeks to reveal is the inherent futility of judging everything through a Puritanical lens. The moral discourses that nurture sexual taboo eventually lose their authority when placed against the shifting moral values of the changing time. The presence of Tiresias within the semiotic body of the poem resembles that of the Freudian super-ego. It is always functioning unconsciously within the psyche of the poem and thus censoring, judging, and restricting its course of action. Eliot envisioned what Foucault perhaps did later

with the publication of first volume of *The History of Sexuality* through the intelectualisation of the biology, in order to relieve it from the stigma of being gross.

From a Freudian psychoanalytic perspective, man merely runs from one figurative death to another. However, there is always something new in dying, albeit figuratively, to be able to experience dread anew and shift the locus of trauma in a transcendentally deferred object. This process ensures a certain kind of stability, but objectively it is always unstable and chaotic. Sigmund Freud, in his seminal work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, very clearly draws a distinction between fear and dread. Dread, according to Freud, contains within it an element of surprise, a surprise that in fact provides human existence with the scope to experience death in more manageable doses before experiencing ultimate death and returning to the inorganicity that precedes life itself. Eliot, in "The Burial of the Dead," says, "*I will show you fear in a handful of dust"* (Eliot, 2001, p. 6). As if the poet is playing a strange trick upon the reader with a childish flippancy. But, what new terror can a mere handful of dust hold? Yet perhaps the very relevance of the entire poem stands upon this very line, upon this quest to feel fear anew. And in this attempt to feel fear in new ways, one must abandon to the flow of time the rigid moral and dogmatic religious discourses and the structures that nurture its rigidity. But what is this fear then? I argue that the fear is the pathology born out of dilemma, it is the unresolved tension and also and answer to that tension, lost amidst the paraphernalia of varied rigid semiotic signs. Once one learns to remain free from this confining rigidity, there arises the opportunity to experience it differently and intellectualise this yearning through available semantic structures. However, within this very process, a dilemma works itself out since one's drives or the Freudian 'id' is constantly mentored by the rigid moral structures which Freud named as 'super-ego'. It is only by overcoming this dilemma, at least in an ideational level, that one may peel away the layers of hypocrisy and accept a new world order and embrace it in order to make *The Waste Land* meaningful through a change in perspective. Eliot, in all sense, is a humanist. He looks upon the changing experiences of human beings through the lens of a philosopher and seeks to give them a place in poetry and thus ensuring poetic justice to the experiences of modernity.

Sigmund Freud in one of his most important and deeply thought provoking works, *Civilization and its Discontents* addresses the same issue and enumerates what he sees as the fundamental tensions between civilization and individual. Freud argues that each individual is in a quest to attain instinctive freedom but the individual's drive or Freudian Id faces a strong challenge from civilization's contrary demand for conformity. The Freudian super-ego or the specific social, parental or other hegemonic structures limit the possibilities of this instinctive freedom by repressing those desires that it has stigmatised as profane. Therefore, the individual always suffers in the face of civilized demands. These imposed codes of civility therefore lead to neurosis. But, Freud observes that even in a space when these structures or these external restrictions are completely obliterated, the self is not free to exercise its free will; it always suffers a sense of guilt. Pamela Thurschwell observes:

> There is a built-in antagonism between the demands of the instincts and the repressive structures of society. We suffer as people from external restrictions (for instance, laws and regulations which tell us not to kill our father or sleep with our mother) and internal restrictions (which often keep us from committing those acts even if we knew we would not get caught, because we would feel unbearable guilt if we did) (Thurschwell, 2001, p.106).

Perhaps the most helpless acceptance of this guilt in Eliot's poem is evoked in the line, "To Carthage then I came/ Burning burning burning" (Eliot, 2001, p. 15). This is a candid and helpless acceptance of sexual 'sin' that the narrator has committed. This burning is as much physical as much it is psychological. The burning is an attempt to appropriate the self's assumed guilt as a part of human experience, as a part of being in that historical process that is in transition when faced against the intellectual current of modernity.

I would like to argue that Eliot's chanting of "Shanith Shanith Shanith" (Eliot, 2001, p. 20) at the end of the poem does not indicate embracing of another religious doctrine rather; he uses those words in a more metaphorical context. It is a way of celebrating free human will. The falling of the London Bridge metaphorically represents the falling of all existing dogmatism of any religious moral stigma or stasis. Therefore, Eliot's chanting of "Shantih Shantih Shantih" refers to the quiescence, the complete stability that the psyche has achieved through contemplation, through a change in perspective that ensures modernity's decentralised discourses on intellectualism. It is a guiltless state of mind which will now decide where to take refuge without being subject to any imposing and dogmatic moral order and this precisely is the promise that the wasteland provides.

Conclusion

Since the beginning of industrialisation in Europe, attempts were made to commodity human labour. In a market-driven economic system, ruled by the strong forces of capitalism, colonialism, and their ancillary apparatuses, various mechanisms were devised to convert human labour into the economic benefit of the state. It is from this very objective that the rigid taboos surrounding sexuality began to loosen. However, the reasoning was pragmatic. Unless the basic biological cravings of a strong workforce were ensured and fulfilled, it would inevitably affect the quantum of production. Yet, the longstanding religious prohibitions could not be thrown away into the dustbin of the past overnight. Hence, the semiotic body of text attempts to portray this deep dilemma. At the same time, however, there is an attempt to bring sexuality, long seen as a forbidden construction, almost into the folds of intellectual discourses. Eliot, implicitly drawing on the writings of his contemporary thinkers, the psychiatrist Freud in particular, deliberates upon this very tension, which later finds its culmination in Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, where sexuality out and out evolves as the subject of high academic interaction.

As a poem *The Waste Land* radically questions and challenges the set frame of parameters that define human experiences, from a fixed moral vantage point located in the axis of the past, as good or profane and provides an alternative vision of a world that is not wasted but full of promises. Therefore, I would like to conclude that the apparently unproductive soil of *The Waste Land* is only wasted in sense as long as it remains fully uncharted, as long as the desire to explore and experience the land and the ability to intellectualise it is stigmatised as profane.

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