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Loss of identity in T.S. Eliot's Poems Selected Poems

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Abstract

T. S. Eliot is often regarded as one of the best writers of the 20th century. The realities and pain of modern civilization after war are embodied in his creative works dealing with the aftermath of war and loss of identity, which earn him the Nobel prize in literature. There are several poems by this author that capture the experience of the contemporary man. There are three parts to this paper. The first part of this essay discusses the life and work of T. S. Eliot, the critical acclaim that his works have received, and the prestigious literary award that he has won. In the second part, we look at what makes contemporary poetry distinct. How T. S. Eliot enhances the characteristics that current poets employ to produce their poetry. The third section is a collection of Eliot's poems that reflect on and depict modern human life and the modern man's loss of identity, including "The Hollow Man," "The Waste Land," and "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," all of which were written after World War II. The poem "Prelude," which alludes to a musical overture to a contemporary day, is a perfect example. Eliot's poetry as a whole reflects the reality and sorrow of contemporary man's identity crisis. The study's conclusion summarizes its findings, which focused on how T.S. Eliot's poetry deals with themes of identity loss, the hardship of living, and solitude in the years after World War II.

Keywords: T. S. Eliot, Poems, Identity

Introduction

S.Eliot: A Biographical Sketch

Tom Stearns Eliot (1888 - 1965) T.S. Eliot stands tall among the greats of 20th-century writers. renowned for their work in a variety of literary fields, including poetry, play, criticism, publishing, and editing. The child of wealthy Boston Brahmin parents, he was born in St. Louis, Missouri.

Eliot said that the atmosphere of his own nation, St. Louis, had a greater impact on him than any other place he had ever lived. There's something about growing up next to a mighty river that can't be explained to those who didn't experience it themselves, I believe (Childrens, 5).

In 1910, he enrolled at Harvard, where he later contributed several poetry. He eventually made his home in England, where he taught and eventually tied the knot. Eliot spent a great deal of time in London, and his time there was formative for him in many ways. One of the most important was meeting Ezra Pound, "the American poet and critic, founder of the Imagist movement in painting, whose many involvements in literary journalism include acting as London correspondent of the Chicago poetry magazine" (Behr,8).Pound recognized Eliot's

lyrical talent and facilitated the publication of his writings in many periodicals. After establishing himself with the publication of his first book, "Prufrock and Other Observation," in 1922, Eliot released his most renowned epic, "The Waste Land," in 1922.

After "The Waste Land" was released, Eliot surpassed all other English poets as the critical and literary standard bearer. While he is most known for his social criticism and commentary on religion and politics, his critical works extend well beyond the realm of literary culture and the study of literature (cooper, 37). Eliot has a significant impact on modern writing. He became religiously conservative after converting to Orthodox Christianity. Eliot cited 17th-century English metaphysical poets and French symbolists as influences.

After the release of Faber & Faber, Eliot officially adopted the British nationality. To quote Behr: "Penguin Books in association with Faber & Faber publish Eliot's selected poems, a selection made by Eliot from his collected poems 1909–1935 that includes all his major poetry except "Four Quartets"."

'Poetry' published his poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by him in 1915. It was his first important work overall, and his first poetry during this time period. Involving the reader's inner existence, the poem makes Prufrock's sufferings seem like the reader's own (Cooper, 51). It was a break with the recent past.

"The Waste Land" by T. S. Eliot came out in the fall of 1922. As Murphy (482) points out, his description of the protagonist's trek across the wastes amounts to nothing more than a metaphor for the perplexing storm that is life itself.

When Eliot converted to Anglicanism in 1927, "Ash-Wednesday" was the first big poem he wrote. When compared to Eliot's other works, "It is reviewed with other poems in Poetry; the reviewer, typically, is surprised by Eliot's move towards Christian poetry" (Behr,37). It was published in 1930 and talks with the difficulties encountered by someone who had previously lacked faith. The Christian religion and Eliot's spiritual concerns became more central to his writing. The critical reception to "Ash-Wednesday" was overwhelmingly positive. One of his friends, Lewis, even implied that it reeked of deceitful attempts to advance one's social standing (Cooper, 26). Despite its mixed reception, one critic, Edwin Muir, said that it is Eliot's "most perfect" poetry and one of his most touching. Many of the more secular literati were taken aback by the poem because of its traditional Christian foundation (Brace, 395).

Eliot's careful blending of Dante's vision into his own, so that the feelings and ideas he is trying to convey are what prevail, suggests the great importance they hold (Murphy, 259), and "The Hollow Men" seemed to support the idea that the crisis of the hollow men is a crisis of soul rather than one of mind or attitude. According to Edmund Wilson, this was the lowest point in the period of despondency that "The Waste Land" so eloquently depicted.

Eliot thought his novel "Four Quarters" from 1943 to be his finest. It is a collection of four old poems, but "it can be read as a kind of spiritual journey, moving from a glimpsed Eden (Burnt Norton), through the fallen world (East Coker), across the river of death (The Dry Salvages), to arrive at the community of the transfigured faithful 'not in time's covenant' (Little Gidding)" (Shape,164). It is generally considered to be his last masterpiece among academics. Although written independently, they share a central theme: man's place in the cosmos and his connection to God and the passage of time.

In addition to his poetry, Eliot wrote seven plays, the most famous of which were "Murder in the Cathedral" in 1935 and "The Family Reunion" in 1939. Both plays may be seen as

advocating isolation from a society that fails to offer a suitable setting for moral growth (Sharpe 150).

Eliot has left an indelible mark on literary criticism. Eliot argues in his critical essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that works of art can only be fully comprehended when placed in the context of their predecessors. It is true that "in a peculiar sense [an artist or poet] will also be aware that he must inevitably be judged by the standards of the past." (Eliot, 3). By arguing that a piece of art can only be understood in relation to the artist's oeuvre as a whole, this article had a significant impact on the development of the New Criticism. Eliot used this technique often, most notably in his epic poem The Waste Land.

An author or artist's ideas and emotions are best conveyed via the objective correlative principle. What this means is that a poet or artist may utilize a collection of things or a chain of occurrences as a formula for conveying feelings and ideas. In his essay "Hamlet and his problems," T. S. Eliot alludes to this literary philosophy (Nasi, 517–519). Shakespeare, according to Eliot's article, fails to captivate his audience and make them experience what Prince Hamlet does in the play. According to Eliot, Shakespeare solely conveys Hamlet's feelings via his words. In 1920, Eliot's "sacred wood" publication detailed this thesis. The phrase "objective correlative" was used by the painter Washington Allston to describe the link between the internal and outward worlds. Santayana's objective correlative concept was first introduced in his interpretation of poetry and religion in the year 1900. Santayana argued that the poet's sentiments may be communicated via the use of correlative objects.

Several reviewers have suggested that Ezra Pound's poetics affected Eliot's objective correlative theory. This hypothesis has been around since Edgar Allan Poe was critiquing it. The use of objective Correlative theory is shown in J. Alfred Prufrock's "Love Song" by the following: "The rattling play of self-images and the increasing awareness of personal identity as metaphysical fiction unsettle both Prufrock and the reader." The citation is (Cooper, 51).

The Nobel Prize in Literature was only one of Eliot's many honors; his play "The Cocktail Party" also won three Tony Awards when it was performed on Broadway. Since his health prevents him from visiting the United States, Eliot received the Presidential Medal of Freedom via the American Embassy in London (Behr, 85).

Section Two: Modern poetry Characteristics

The term "modern" refers to a broad cultural movement that emerged in the late 19th century and dominated most of the world stage in the 20th. It's an artistic trend or style that rejects canonical conventions. Poets of the modern movement actively rebelled against the conventions of the nineteenth century in an attempt to reimagine and reinvent poetry (Blumenfeld, 29). It's an unusual blend of modern and classic elements. Many individuals today are likely gloomy, despondent, and concerned as a direct result of World War I and its aftermath (Barznji, 48).

Poets of the modernist movement sought to innovate in how poetry was written and presented, and as a result, their works share a number of distinguishing characteristics. These characteristics set modernist poetry apart from earlier forms of poetry. In particular, modernist poets favoured free verse and open form over the more rigid structures favored by classical poets (Bollig, 286). Compared to the strict forms and meters of classical poetry, this is a radical departure. They used free verse as a way out of strict metrical patterns; nowadays, it is considered a cornerstone of modern poetry (Awan & Khalida 67).

In addition, Hegelian conceptions of completeness and wholeness are challenged and further fragmented in modern poetry via the use of fragmentation as a literary technique. The contemporary authors' strong use of allusion and "fragmentation" in literary works "was really the sign of individual's or human's fragmented and disorderly or problematic existence" (Tajuddin, 6). Alkafaji and Marzoog write, "Literary allusion is the reference to other literary works, explicitly or implicitly, complete line or a word" (83). Consider The Waste Land, a monumental poem by T.S. Eliot.

Symbolism is one of the most influential literary trends of the nineteenth century. It marks the beginning of contemporary poetry since it gives poets the freedom to express themselves in their own language and the responsibility to always seek for innovation (Pedersen 594). Literary historians have adopted this phrase. After World War I, there was a significant period of literary symbolism. Symbolism, both borrowed and original, is used by many of today's most influential poets.

Poets who were disturbed and often disillusioned by the 19th century industrialized society turned to symbolism as an escape via poetry. The Gloom of War Poems of the 20th Century Generally speaking, works from different eras have a common topic. When the 20th century arrived, however, the authors' lives were suddenly thrust into a new context. This was the gloomy outlook's central point. As defined by Ayassrah and Alidmat (page 137), pessimism is the belief that everything has a negative tendency or is destined for bad endings. Many of the books were written during or as a reaction to challenging historical epochs like World War I and the downside of the Industrial Revolution.

The modernist poets' emphasis on the individual was a defining characteristic of their new approach. Poets like them wanted to write about inwardly focused experiences rather than the more popular outwardly focused experiences of their forebears. Poets of the modernist movement, in contrast to their forebears, tended to focus on introspective themes rather than the external beauty of their surroundings (Tate, 265). Because of this, contemporary poetry has an introspective quality not found in the canon of classical literature.

T. S. Eliot was a major player in the movement that pushed poetry away from the classical and toward the modernist. Among his many works, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is illustrative of the shifts that came to define contemporary poetry. The author employs literary devices favored by modernists, such as internal monologues. Eliot uses a monologue to convey the inner monologue of a guy living in the city. By doing so, the author conveys Prufrock's feelings of disappointment, remorse, perplexity, and loneliness. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T. S. Eliot is "a nonstop flow of an urban man's inner consciousness" (Videnov, 126). These elements were chosen to reflect the author's inner rather than outer nature.

Eliot emphasizes the rapid speed of contemporary life via the device of fragmentation. Author and other modernist poets argue that fragmentation is fundamental to the contemporary experience, since people go through profound changes that neither they nor their ancestors could have foreseen (Chinitz, 237). Given the lack of a discernible structure in human existence and society as a whole, the result is anarchy (Jonathan, 175).

Eliot and other modernist poets, according to Faulk (605), felt compelled to write in a style that mirrored the disjointed, disorderly nature of modern life. This viewpoint marked a radical departure from that of classical authors, who often wanted their works to be organized in a linear fashion. Therefore, readers of contemporary poetry by authors such as Eliot may find its understanding a very taxing process if they are unable to make the necessary mental

connections between the poems' many contexts. For instance, if the setting suddenly shifts from urban to rural or from one geographical area to another that is completely different, the reader may get disoriented. This reader may find the poetry challenging to grasp because of the potential for confusion.

Therefore, many readers have assumed that contemporary poetry are written specifically for the wealthy and literate elite of society (Tate, 121), who have access to and can make sense of a wide range of information. Therefore, the typical reader believes that he or she does not belong to the intended audience for these kinds of works. Instead, they choose poems that are easy to understand and that relate to concepts with which the reader is already familiar.

Section Three :Loss of identity in T.S.Eliot's selected poems

Since the identity crisis and the repetitive character of existence are universal problems, the contemporary man portrayed in T.S. Eliot's poetry is accessible to readers from all walks of life. In a world ruled by machines, where urban deterioration and the loss of one's sense of self are constant realities, people have always struggled to find meaning in their lives. The movement known as Modernism comprises the early 20th-century reaction against Realists' depiction of reality and the subsequent shift to a more realistic depiction of the self and the world at large. Specifically, modernist poetry involves a profoundly conflicted figure and their relationship to society, which leads to questions of representation and aesthetic fragmentation. Modernist concepts include things like disconnection, defamiliarization, isolation, and a fractured self.

Eliot aimed to refine poetry by making it more oblique, evocative, and precise. Imagists taught him the importance of vivid imagery, while philosopher-poet T. E. Hulme and early mentor Ezra Pound taught him to avoid sentimentality and to value the medium of poetry over the individual poet (Abrams 2501).

His method was a rejection of the Romantic Movement's prioritization on the self and the emotions in the nineteenth century. Since the intellectual rather than the contemplative poet generated the finest poem, Eliot believed that the poet's goal should be to appeal to the head rather than the emotions (Thorne, 282).

Given the prevalence of identity crisis and routine in modern life, Eliot's depiction of the modern man as a spectator of modern life rings especially true for current readers. To quote poet Robert Frost: "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." "(Abrams, 2539)"

T. S. Eliot's early poems, including "Prufrock," "The Waste Land," and "The Hollow Men," address cultural dissolution and its relationship to identity crisis. When we lose our Christian belief in the soul, our socially formed roles, and the basic components of our identities, we become mindless robots. A female character in "The Waste Land" questions her lover, "Do/You know nothing?" Are you blind? Remember anything? "Nothing" "Are you alive, or not! Do you not have something to think about? The idea of the undead crowds crossing London Bridge is a powerful metaphor for the disintegration of identity explored in "The Waste Land." In "Gerontion," the image of dessicated old age and the picture of the hollow men in the poem's title serve as dramatic metaphors for the experience of identity loss. Only when Eliot converted to Anglicanism in 1927 did he attempt to address the issue of identity crisis.

Eliot used Prufrock and his anguish over love in "The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock." The issue he has in romantic relationships is never addressed. He constantly warns that modern man has lost himself in his pursuit of success. Highly emotional outpourings and intimate confidences,

according to Eliot, distract from the poetry by drawing attention to the poet rather than the poem itself. Since he didn't think Romanticism's emphasis on personal autonomy would lead to more objective and rule-based forms of critique, he was against it (Bertens, 12).

Lots of things in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" seem quite current. Characters in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" are frozen by the meaninglessness of their lives and time (Patil, 24). The dramatic monologue of the Victorian poet is recast here as a subconscious self-disclosure. Listener assumes role of fictitious character in quest for true self.

Let us go then, you and I,

When the evening is spreadout against the sky

Like apatient etherized upon a table;

Let us go, through certain half-deserted street,

The muttering retreats

Of restless nights in one night cheap hotels

And sawdust restaurants with oyster shells:

Streets that follow like a tedious argument

Of insidious intent

To lead you to an overwhelming question...

Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"

Let us go and make our visit.(L.1-12)

The title alone sets the tone for failure in 'Prufrock' with its satirical undertones. Prufrock falls short of the lofty expectations set for him by his name, and the love song is never performed. The picture is utilized to convey the insignificance of Prufrock's existence and the low regard in which he holds himself, which are, of course, emblematic of twentieth-century society at large. Eliot is able to portray his own opinions without directly participating in a personal representation of them via the use of these strategies and through the use of allusions that remark on the present by reference to the past (Thorne, 288).

The poet T.S. Eliot once said that poetry is "not the expression of a personality, but an escape from personality." He proposes a theory of poetry that sees the creative process behind poetry not as the expression of one's emotions to the world but rather as a total letting go of one's identity (Jefferson & Robey, 32). The success of an artist, according to Eliot, requires constant sacrifice and the eventual oblivion of one's own identity. Eliot's religious leanings are on full display in his call for "self-sacrifice" (Bennett & Royle, 161).

Eliot, widely regarded as the century's greatest poet, notably raised more questions than he answered about the "received ideas and accepted appearances" of daily life.(Sharpe,34) Eliot's early poems delved into the depths of misery, establishing the absolute hollowness and disillusionment of a war-ravaged contemporary world.

By giving the first and longest session of "The Waste Land" the title "The Burial of the Dead," in which he likens Europe to a cemetery and the living Europeans to the dead bodies therein because the living are suffering more than the dead, the reader is immediately made aware of the bleak tone that permeates the poem. Eliot believed that contemporary civilisation in

Europe after World War I was on the edge of catastrophic collapse, which is shown in the Waste Land as a poem (Sauder, 19).

April is the cruellest month, breeding

Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing

Memory and desire, stirring

Dull roots with spring rain.(L.1-4)

The first chapter of "The Waste Land" is titled "The Burial of the Dead." The opening verse of the poem clearly contains a lament for a prewar love affair, but this theme is not developed further. Unfortunately contrasting the excellent rural life before the war to the present awful picture after the war, which is full of degradation, devastation, decomposition, and disability, Eliot seems to have given in to despair. It is noted that this section of the poem has a tidal wave of figurative pessimism about modern man. In the opening verse, which is full of analogies, April is personified as a flower seller. Eliot first throws off the reader's understanding by personifying April as a metaphor at the beginning of the first line. The poet gives April human characteristics via the use of rhetorical image to heighten the impact upon readers. Metaphors like this are very effective in drawing the reader's attention to a picture that is diametrically opposed to the truth. Even though April marks the beginning of spring in Europe and is therefore traditionally associated with feelings of renewal, love, hope, youth, growth, new power, creativity, and optimism, Eliot portrays it as the worst and cruelest month that renews sorrow, sadness, and depression because all of the nice symbols of April disappeared in Europe after World War I.

In the "Hollow Men" speaker say:

This is the dead land

This is cactus land

Here the stone images

Are raised, here they receive ...(L.39-42)

Stone alludes to a passage in The Waste Land where Eliot draws parallels between contemporary human garbage and stone. To put it another way, modern men have grown heartless because nihilism and emptiness have brutally overrun them. Written Eliot places a lot of attention on the ambiguities of contemporary life, and his poem is composed of fragments that demonstrate this. In truth, the poem illustrates the ways in which people without faith experience hardship. It's possible that Eliot is attempting to convey to the reader the idea that many men are confused about who they are. He writes with the assumption that modern culture is unable to foster spirituality and belief (Singh, 1).

The speaker on "The Hollow Men" represents Eliot's anxiety at the decline of religious belief and morals in contemporary society. Because of this, the hollow men feel alienated from themselves and society as a whole, and as a consequence, they lose their sense of identity and meaning in life (Singh, 1). The men in the poem strive to confront the Mighty, but they are helpless in the presence of such a mighty deity since they lack eyes. So, they set out to become spiritual men, but instead their thoughts were stuffed with the chaff of their own sins and transgressions. The empty men's acts reveal that they are awash in doubt about whether or not God would accept and listen to them (3).

As one of many contemporary souls tormented by emptiness, Eliot uses "The Hollow Men" to investigate the condition of his own soul. The circumstances of the contemporary world and modern community—circumstances that pushed men to ive for the sake of self rather than'selves'—are to blame for this emptiness (Barzinji, 96). Today's subjects, according to Lineany, can't decide between good and evil. The most terrible souls in the poem are not the ones who have committed the greatest crimes, but the ones who are unable to tell the difference between wrong and good. They are in a limbo, a position in which they have no hope, no pleasure, and no suffering since they cannot make a choice. The poem's heroes are those who see through this facade to the ugly reality of contemporary life (Barzinji, 98). In order to emphasize the argument that he has been making throughout the poem, Eliot breaks up the last lines and shortens the final stanza in order to emphasize the violent, pointless conflict of contemporary humans against their tragic surroundings. Therefore, the modern worshipers in "The Hollow Men" are figments of Ellot's mind. Those infected with this endemic "shadow" feel a feeling of foreboding death, something between apathy and a lack of morality (Barzinji, 99).

Sharpe, a critic, notes that young Eliot was profoundly inspired by the urban filth of the neighborhood where he grew up in St. Louis, which led to a negative passion for such surroundings and their residents and a sense of emptiness in his poetry. Eliot's "Prelude" is a powerful expression of existentialism, a philosophy that sprang from "atheism" and "absurdism" that challenges the universe and its irrationality, uprooting and disorienting humans, depriving them of logic and pragmatism. At first glance, the poem's title seems ironic, given that the term "prelude," which typically refers to a musical introduction to a day in the modern world, has no relevance to the poem. Rather, the poet personifies the routine and staid schedule of urban life as he narrates the tedium of daily existence: "The Winter evening settles down/ With smells of steak in the passageway/... And then the lighting of the lamps."(1 - 2, 13) That man's existence has been reduced to a form of emptiness is made clear by the phrase "the burnt-ends of smoky days," (4) which alludes to a night that is the burned-out end of a day, which is to say, a worthless finish to a useless day, and which reflects the narrator's feelings of melancholy and solitude.

When "the morning comes to consciousness," the Second Prelude starts, symbolizing the sterility of existence ingested by the regularity and orderliness of life in the metropolis. Further, the term "masquerades" depicts the false pretenses and artificialities that people in urban societies engage into, hiding their true selves behind masks of deceit and affected shows, which Eliot questions in questioning the "new urban lifestyle, its lack of direction and its surplus of contemplation and duty." (Smidt, 77).

His soul stretched tight across the skies

That fade behind a city block,

Or trampled by insistent feet

At four and five and six o'clock;

And short square fingers stuffing pipes,

And evening newspapers, and eyes

Assured of certain certainties,

The conscience of a blackened street

Impatient to assume the world .(L.39-47)

In order to convey his criticism of the industrial surroundings, Eliot writes, "his soul stretched tight across the skies that fad behind the city block." The Symbolist writers' impact on the dreamy imagery allows the speaker to take on the ugliness of the city itself, creating a paradoxical transcendence distinct from nature and the Romantic sublime. At its conclusion, the poem paints a bleak picture of a world that has stopped changing for the better. Together, the predicament of women and the general populace, as well as the lifeless state of the street representing the outside world, highlight the pointlessness of existence. Of man's anonymity, lost in the tedium of routine existence.

Conclusion

Loss is an inevitable part of life for every human, and the pain of loss is inextricably bound up with a sense of self. Struggle is a character-building byproduct of experience. It's hard to imagine being human and without knowing what it's like to suffer and recover from a loss. Loss may affect a person on many different levels, from physical organs and bodily functions to material things and their symbolic connotations to the social and cultural meanings of those objects and, lastly, one's moral and spiritual convictions and ideals. Loss of this kind might be thought of as "identity loss," the breaking of a key aspect of one's own identity—a specific, meaningful, and positively affec- tive self-other link.

Eliot tries to find order in the chaos that World War L has wrought over Europe. Between the Ruins and the Hollow Men Eliot's effort to reassemble the social fragmentation that has plagued Western civilizations and individual identities by reappropriating the ideals of previous generations. References to new beginnings throughout the text illustrate the pointlessness of basing a society on a single principle. Eliot's philosophy is challenged by the dynamic nature of identity construction. Eliot's poem represents the unquenchable desire to exert dominion over external factors and create a perfect cultural paradise because its goal is to draw attention to the inconsistencies inherent in human nature and to shed light on the complexity that govern human action. Establishing a utopian society is described as ludicrous in Ehot's social ideal. Eiot understands the seeming simplicity of his goal and uses a deliberate lack of coherence to highlight the fact that culture and identity are inherently inconsistent with the desires of men yet ultimately enrich humankind. Eliot's poem "The Hollow Men" focuses on the theme of nothingness, meaninglessness, and loss of identity in the lives of modern humans, and the characters within the poem who have been described as the empty men and represent modern men live very meaningless lives without any hope or aim and in a state of constant fear. They are inaction, for better or worse. They have also been turned down by both Heaven and Hell, therefore they now reside in a place between the two. They have no goals in life, and this is mostly due to the fact that they have no real faith or connection to God.

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