

The role of mythical method in T.S. Eliot's "The waste land"

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Abstract

The Waste Land is the most extended example of Eliot's use of the mythical technique. This article is about the use of mythical method in the poem 'The Waste Land' written by T. S. Eliot. It throws light on the mythical waste land of the Fisher King symbolizes the contemporary decay and spiritual sterility. The sick king symbolizes the sick humanity. In the case of king the sickness has resented from sexual sin. In this article the poet wishes to convey the idea that sexual sin leads to spiritual death. It is also expresses the idea that spiritual health can be regained only through penance, suffering and self discipline. In the poem 'The Waste Land' Eliot use of the phrases "the dead tree" "the handful of dust", "the dry grass" are all derived from the biblical imaginary of decay and demolition caused by spiritual sterility

Keywords: Mythical Method, The Waste Land, Eliot use of the phrases, the dead tree

Introduction

When The Waste Land was first published in the inaugural number of the criterion October 1992, it was savagely criticized by literary critics on different count. Wyndham Lewis called the poem "spurious verbal algebra" whereas Lewis Utterayer remarked that it was "pompous parade of erudition". Amy Lowell went to the extent of calling it "a price of tripe". The tunes literary supplement us its font might criticism said that the poem was nothing but "parodying without skill". In short, the poem was considered a scholarly non-sense and the view was expressed that it would gradually "sink itself". In the river of time due to its own weight of wounds, myths and the lead of literary references and quotations which could not be easily understood the ordinary readers.

However with the passage of time, the poem gained appreciation from the reading public and soon it began to be called a marvelous achievement of T.S. Eliot, many scholarly critics like F.R. Leavis clearly brooks revealed to the readers the real meaning of the poem. As a result, The Waste Land began to call a highly condensed epic the modern age gradually the view that the poem "truly reflected and redeemed the contemporary age" gained.

The Mythical Method

The mythical methods of The Waste Land is to untruth the savagery behind the most lines of beautiful poetry and find remnants of primitive mentality. Weston also offered him a structure and a more precise technique for his mythical method. In the poem The Waste Land the poet uses the mythical method to convey the idea to us. The mythical method consists in manipulating a continuous parallel between the contemporary situation and the old mythical situations. The poet has put together the old and the new, the ancient and the modern and in this way he draws the comparison and the contrast between the past and the present. When a poet employs the mythical method, he put the contemporary problems in the historical penspecline in order to prove the problem of the present.

In this poem Eliot shows that he has made use of myth and legend which he had borrowed from other significant books. He acknowledges his debt to two great anthropologists, Miss Jessie Weston and Sir James Frazer. The poet says that he borrowed mythical material from Jessie Weston's book 'From Rituals to Romance (1920)' and from James Frazer's 'The Golden Bough'. The poet says that he was deeply influenced by these works of anthropology. He defined from these books the myth and legends which from the base of the poem. Miss Jessie Weston's book depicts him with the legend of the grave and Fisher king. From The Golden Bough he defined his knowledge of a number of vegetation and fertility myths and situates, especially those connected with Attics, Adoms and Osiris. These myths are so fundamental to the poem that it would be worthwhile to examine some of them.

The Holy Grail legend is a medieval legend associated with the adventures of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. The grail was the cup or plate used by Christ for his last supper. When he was crucified, his blood was collected in it. This Holy Grail is supported to have acquired medicinal and miraculous properties and become the object of worship and devotion. The lance which was used to kill and dispose the body of Christ was also placed with this grail. A time came when the grail mysteriously disappeared from the chapel and many bold kings staked their life to search it. It was generally believed that the lost grail sometimes appeared in the sky as a floating saner with great splendor but it could be spotted only by a knight who possesses virginal purity. T. S. Eliot wants to express the idea through this legend that only the sexually can achieved success in holy matters.

According to another legend, the grail was hidden in a temple know as chapped pompous. It was believed that the soldiery of fisher king had outraged. The chesty of a group of nuns of the chapel as a result, the king had become physically weak impotent to produce children. The importance of the king was reflected symptomatically in the king's land which become suddenly barren and famine -stricken. It was believed that the melody could coned only if a knight of pure born arrived at the chapel perilous and answered the riddle. Then the king's body

would be washed by the holy water which will be provided health and energy to the king. This rebirth of king would be followed by the life giving rain to the dry land which will then enjoy its earlier fertility. This myth also talks us that purity and sacrifice will bring back life to the waste land.

Conclusion

In 'The Waste Land' Eliot says that the country has become a waste land due to the kings' sins. He tells them that regeneration is possible only if they return to god. He links up the past with the present and says that sexual sins and spiritual decay are responsible for the peacelessness of the contemporary civilization will be possible only when humanity is prepared to pay the price in the form of suffering and penance. The poet refers the waste land of king Oedipus of Thebe and also to the biblical waste land of the ominous as mentioned in Ecclesiastes and Ezekiel of the Old Testament.

References

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