

SPIRITUAL BARRENNESS, WAR, AND ALIENATION: READING ELIOT'S *THE WASTE LAND*

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ABSTRACT

*In his widely celebrated poem *The Waste Land* (1922) Thomas Stearns Eliot, the Nobel laureate, pictures the spiritual downfall of the modern world and delineates the capitalist canon on the rise. People of this era are trapped into the materialistic quicksand that makes them totally sterile and hollow. Consequently, traditional beliefs like Christianity have been replaced by capitalism. The lack of spirituality, Eliot asserts, makes the modern man lustful and robotic where people are haunted by animal-like sex and deadened by routine-bound life. Eliot's modern human lives in an age which is chaotic and horrible at large and is caused by man-made war. The war creates refugees and maternal cry for genocide to grab the natural resources and leads the ecosystem to a destructive and fragile state. Eliot's morally decayed men are alienated not only from themselves but also from the friends and society they belong. Eliot also shows these horrifying condition in his poems like "The Hollow Men" and "Gerontion" to indicate spiritual emptiness, "Sweeney among the Nightingales" to describe lust and "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" for the depiction of alienation of the modern inhabitants. In *The Waste Land*, there are recurrent and crucial themes such as spiritual dryness, sexual perversion, money making war, capitalism, lack of eco-sensitivity as well as isolation which have been focused by Eliot in a vivid manner. This paper aims at exploring the spiritual barrenness caused by the capitalist economy, mechanical sex, and war, and unveils how modern man destroys the ecosystem for profit and power keeping the spiritual issues behind as well. This research also investigates how Eliot presents modern civilization in quest of spiritual solace and finds the path of emancipation in this poem.*

KEYWORDS: *Spiritual Barrenness, Mechanical Sex, War, Capitalism, Ecocriticism, Alienation*