Images Of Death In The Waste Land

The Wasteland by T. S Eliot is a significant work of English poetry, published in 1922. The poem is regarded as the epic of the modern age. It’s a long ballad consist of four hundred forty lines in 5 parts. The poem depicts modern crisis and situation after first world war. There is hardly any connection among stanzas, each part of The Wasteland shows different ideas and crisis of first world war on human civilization. It contains great deal of thoughts. This is the poem that predefines what poetry is. Its structure and content has the freshness. The poem is full of different images such as flowers, water, sea, garden but the most prominent image in The Wasteland is the image of death. On an epic scale allusion, sterile and dead images are the most occurring images in the poem.

From the epigraph of the poem the image of death can be seen, it clearly suggests the life in the modern waste land is a living death or life in death, like the life of Sibyl. She was the beloved of Apollo who gifted her the attribute of immortality, but without internal youth. The effect was she grew old and ached for death.

The poem depicts the problems of emptiness and barrenness. Imagination is deadened. There is hardly any sign of any positive possibility. The opening section of the Wasteland Land is entitled The Burial of the Dead which refers to the burial of the dead fertility god, the burial service for the dead performed by the Christian church.

The very first part of the poem The Burial of the Dead already indicates the main topic of the whole section, which is full of images of death. All images are chiefly concerned with the death of nature and death of a human being. Eliot presents that life in contemporary world is a life in death. Man has lost faith in spiritual values. There is a sense of decay and decomposition.

The picture of dead nature, which can't recover after the winter, is reached out in the following scene through the appalling image of 'the stony rubbish”, where the plants can't develop. The concept of sterility is a crucial part of Eliot's symbolism. Regarding nature, it is viewed as failure to bring the hover of seasons into move. Sterility is figuratively communicated through dryness while ripeness is related with water.

Eliot deliberately making it poetry difficult. In the poem “The Burial of the Dead” it depicts an “Unreal City” where the narrator meets a man he used to know and asks him:

“That corpse you planted last year in your garden,

Has it begun to sprout?”

Burying a corpse for it to come back to life leads to the idea of rebirth, but it does so by coming back to the first symbols in the poem, the reversal of life and death.

The state of nature of seasons is broken, there's no expectation of rebirth of nature.” The dead man gives no answer; that intensifies the emptiness and hopelessness of the situation. The speaker, who is alive, is able to see the ghosts of the dead and speak to them. The ghosts

which flowed up the Unreal City are alive and dead at the same time. Eliot is presenting a vision of contemporary life. The city is unreal because it is cut from both natural and spiritual sources of life. Each individual exists in loneliness. The crowds moving over London Bridge are the spiritually dead citizens of the waste land going their daily round of dull routine. Loss of faith has always resulted in sterility and spiritual death-life in death. They do not live, they merely exist, as do dead things

Store of death pictures is seen obviously all through the lyric. According to a critic humans are to be contrasted with so much things as a stick, a canal, a pipe. And no more, theirs is a real existence in death, an existence of complete latency and lack of care. That is the reason winter is welcome to them and April is the cruellest of months, for it helps them to remember the stirrings of life. The poem presents the gloomy and traumatic picture of the contemporary human generation affected by the consequences of world war I. Social spiritual vacuum due to world war I. Eliot’s Waste Land is a volatile poem, beyond the epic boundary of the poem there is an epic degeneration which cannot be handled.