Literary Analysis: T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land

[Name of the Writer]

[Name of the Institution]

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T.S. Eliot was a classical poet. In 1922, Eliot published “The Waste Land”. Although the poem focuses on the culture, the five fragments offer a different theme individually. For this paper, three segments from the poem have been selected which will be analyzed ahead.

**Fragment #1 The Burial of the Dead**

The poem opens with the discussion of death. The word “winter” at the end engulfs the idea of death (Reeves, 2017). It somehow suggests that death and cold can give a warm experience (Reeves, 2017). Eliot suggests that in winter, normal life gets hibernated and one can avoid the challenge of facing life. When Eliot wrote this poem, he was afflicted with a nerves illness. Many believe that Eliot was avoiding the change that occurred in his life as the truth behind the poem. The words ‘Starnbergersee’ and ‘Hofgarten’ both point to Munich. The former points to the home of Marie Louise Larisch while the latter refers to a garden located in the middle of Munich. Marie Louise Larisch stands in the same garden symbolizing the European decadence at that time following a crushing defeat in World War I (Reeves, 2017). Eliot describes the dualistic nature of the surroundings in a magnificent way. He portrays a significant difference between the pre-world surroundings that cheerful and lively and the post-world war which presents a boring picture. Lastly, Eliot used German to emphasize that He is not at all Russian. Furthermore, Eliot used the allusion ‘son of man' and ‘you cannot say or guess'. This is the way in which God communicates with Ezekiel. Eliot seemed to place himself in a God-like position and addressing the readers as his followers. From the phrase ‘A heap of broken images’ Eliot points out the broken nature of the world. From the word ‘Hyacinth' Eliot refers to a tragic love story of Hyacinth, a Spartan prince, and Apollo. Apollo accidentally killed Hyacinth and mourned his death for a long time, which is exactly Eliot has suggested to (Reeves, 2017).

**Fragment#2 A Game of Chess**

This fragment is full of with references to the Decadence and pre-war world. From ‘throne’ Eliot meant England (Eliot, 2009). Eliot says that the pre-war throne was seductive and found in the works of American writers (Eliot, 2009). However, the seductive nature of the throne has been lost now. Every symbol of wealth that was mentioned in the poem has been emptied till now; such was the extent of decadence. Furthermore, Eliot tells the insanity of the woman who says that despite all her wealth, her mind cannot find peace. This referencing suggests that there is a sense of loss in the poem. This poem depicts spiritualism because it was written at a time when women asked spiritualists to assist them in communicating with the loved ones (Eliot, 2009). Eliot takes the fragmentation to a newer level by renaming Mysterious Rag to Shakespearian Rag which depicts that culture has died in the society. Additionally, the lack of guidance has been termed as the cause behind the decadence of society. This fragment is loosely coupled as were the people of Europe at time. In the last part of this fragment, Eliot focused on womanhood. As Eliot says Lil is taking pills to bring it off, it is suggested that He is talking about the abortion. Furthermore, Eliot demonstrated decadence in a way that all women are portrayed as miserable but each one of them seems to be giving advice to other women. Near the end, the phrase ‘hurry up please its time’ demonstrates the sense of urgency as the woman recounts her story. Eliot seems to suggest that something bad is coming towards the woman which she is unaware of.

**Fragment# 3 The Fire Sermon**

Eliot, in the opening lines, has reference to a marriage song from Spenser's Prothalamion. The water has been used to represent the joyous moment. The use of water here points to the loss of life once again. It must be noted that there are signs of human living representing in the fragment, but there are no human beings around. Furthermore, there is no clear reason brought forward explaining the wreckage and disaster of the Waste Land (Williamson, 1998). However, Fisher King has provided the world with this idea that if a writer suffers; the world around him also suffers (Williamson, 1998). According to Eliot, the world has lost its culture and turned into barren land. One could hope that this will change in the future and prosperity will be attained. However, Elliot has pointed out that against the backdrop of wars that are going on, the prosperity has become a distant and elusive dream for mankind. Moving further, Eliot has explained that love and lust always bring detrimental consequences along with them. Eliot has referred to the story of the hunting goddess Diana and Actaeon, who spied on Diana (Williamson, 1998). Diana cursed Actaeon and turned into a stag, which later on was torn apart by his own hounds. By referring to the voices singing in the dome, Eliot referred to a noble virgin knight Percival, who was known for his purity. Eliot seems to criticize the noble prince, as being known for purity suggests that one has down-graded lust. Moreover, Eliot has given a dual meaning to ‘Mr. Eugenides’. Eugenides is both a tarot card merchant and a man finding peace in the affection of gay men. The hotels that have been mentioned by Eliot were known for their homosexual men. Lastly, Eliot symbolizes cheapness of love and affection by referring to Tiresias, who was converted into a woman as a punishment for separating two snakes (Williamson, 1998).

**References**

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Williamson, G. (1998). *A reader's guide to TS Eliot: a poem-by-poem analysis*. Syracuse University Press.