**T. S. Eliot, Unreal city, The burial of the dead – Analysis.**

The extract under analysis is taken from the end of the first section (The Burial of the Dead) of the poem “The waste Land” written by T. S. Eliot in 1922.

The final part of the first stanzas begin with the image of an “Unreal city”, which echoes Baudelaire’s “fourmillante cite” (image of the Fleurs du Mal, a poem written by Charles Baudelaire, published in 1857 that deal with themes of modern eroticism and decadence).

T.S. Eliot starts with a concrete setting -the city considered unreal is a district of West Minster- pictured under a “brown fog”; fog becomes symbolical since it conveys an idea of confusion that surrounds the human beings in the city: it makes the city unreal, leading not to distinguish things. The same difficulty to distinguish is spotted for the crowd that stands for a spot, a mass of people.

In this way, the poet depicts the gloomy procession of London employee on their way to their place of work at 9.00 a.m.; a “crowd flowed” (they look like a river) emptied of their personalities , like zombies flows over London Bridge while a “brown fog” hangs like a wintry cloud over the proceedings.

If they were un-dead, these characters are dragged along the London Bridge in a crowd that has no size or identity, but only manages to evoke gloomy images of death and despair.

Eliot twice quotes Dante in describing this scene: “I had not thought death had undone so many” (from Canto 3 of the Inferno) and “Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled” (from Canto 4). The first quote refers to the area just inside the Gates of Hell; the second refers to Limbo, the first circle of Hell. The people in this scene are sighing and staring (more Inferno allusions) only at the ground in front of their feet. They seem pretty unsatisfied with their un-dead lives.

In the poem seems that the citizen of modern London remind Eliot of those without any blame who are relegated to the Gates of Hell, and those who dwell in Limbo, in Dante’s famous vision. Each member of the crowd, moving mechanically, keeps his eyes on his feet; the mass of men flow up a hill and down King William Street, which is in the financial district of London. Here the narrator notes how a church (the Church of Saint Mary Woolnoth) bell let out a "dead sound on the final stroke of nine". After that, the narrator recognizes a man named Stetson and cries out to him, remembering that he fought with him during the First Punic War, and then he asks Stetson whether the corpse he planted last year in his garden has begun to sprout. The episode concludes with a famous line from the preface to Baudelaire’s Fleurs du Mal (an important collection of Symbolist poetry).

The final episode of the section is surreal. In this part Eliot establishes the real wasteland of the poem, the modern city. The speaker walks through a London, a city desolate and depopulated, inhabited only by ghost of the past. He sees a figure with whom he once fought in a battle during the Punic Wars (in 206 B.C.) between Rome and Carthage (both futile and excessively destructive wars). This reference postpones the reader to the new idea of time, a simultaneous of concept. The speaker asks the ghostly figure, Stetson, about the fate of a corpse planted in his garden: again, with the garden, we return to the theme of regeneration and fertility.

This encounter can be read as a quest for a meaning behind the tremendous slaughter of the first World War.

The great respective weights of history, tradition, and the poet’s dead predecessors combine to create an oppressive burden. Eliot seems to be arguing that all wars are the same, just as he suggests that all men are the same. In these final lines Eliot is directly speaking to reader.