



**“Modern Man Image in  
T.S. Eliot’s “The Love Song  
of J. Alfred Prufrock”,**

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### **Abstract**

The twentieth century period witness a deep change that swept all the life aspects due to WWI and WWII and their huge outcomes on modern man. Thus, the cultural environment is figured based on the de facto status of modern life. People are drastically affected by modern values and trends that became prominent cornerstones in their life. Not forgetting the newly emerging movements on the political, economic and social levels around the whole Globe. Writers of this era seek to erect new notions and produce professional works that characterise their time and reflect their high tide aspirations. T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) via his “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” tries to show modern man in his actual psychological and physical being. Eliot uses stream of consciousness technique to narrate the experience of Prufrock, a poetic technique that is developed by his fellow Modernist writers. The poem is a dramatic interior monologue of a young city man, called Prufrock. He is filled with feelings of isolation and is unable to have a decisive action. Prufrock stands for modern man aspirations. Eventually, he exemplifies frustration and reflects modern man impotency, besides thwarted desires and modern fantasies. Prufrock condemns his physical and intellectual status. He laments the lost opportunities in his life and his sheer spiritual vacancy. Love for Prufrock is haunted by unattainable dreams and no advent for the lost mate. Prufrock suffers of complex feelings of weariness, regret, embarrassment, longing, emasculation, sexual frustration, a sense of decay, with no awareness of mortality, “Prufrock” has become one of the most recognized voices in modern literature due to his authentic image for modern man. The research paper addresses the topic based on the psychoanalysis theory of Sigmund Freud. The concepts of self, ego and unconscious part of human psychology will be addressed, as these components show the disturbed emotions and reactions of Prufrock in regard to his daily life.

**Key words:** Prufrock, Love Song , Modern Poetry, T.S.Eliot, Modernism.

## الخلاصة

شهدت فترة القرن العشرين تغيرًا جذريًا شمل جميع جوانب الحياة بسبب الحرب العالمية الأولى والحرب العالمية الثانية ونتائجهما الهائلة على الإنسان الحديث. وبالتالي ، فإن البيئة الثقافية كانت قد تشكلت وفق الحالة الفعلية للحياة العصرية. وهكذا فقد تأثر الناس بشكل كبير بالقيم والافكار الحديثة التي أمست بمثابة الحجر الاساس في حياتهم. ولا ننسى الحركات الناشئة حديثًا على المستويات السياسية والاقتصادية والاجتماعية في جميع أنحاء العالم. يسعى كتاب هذا العصر إلى بناء مفاهيم جديدة وإنتاج أعمال احترافية تميز عصرهم وتعكس تطلعاتهم الكبيرة . يحاول الشاعر تي اس اليوت (1888 - 1965) من خلال كتابته لقصيدة « أغنية الحب لجي الفريد بروفروك » إلى إظهار صورة الإنسان الحديث بشكله الفعلي نفسيًا وجسديًا كما هو . يستخدم الشاعر إليوت أسلوب السرد الخيالي في القصيدة من اجل سرد تجربة بروفروك ، وهو أسلوب « شعريًا» تم تطويره من قبل الكتاب الحديثين المعاصرين للشاعر اليوت. القصيدة عبارة عن مونولوج داخلي درامي لرجل شاب متمدن اسمه بروفروك. وهو شاب مليء بمشاعر العزلة وغير قادر على اتخاذ إجراء حاسم. في الواقع، يمثل بروفروك صورة الإنسان الحديث وتطلعاته. في نهاية المطاف ، فإن بروفروك يمثل الإحباط ويعكس عجز الإنسان الحديث ، إلى جانب الرغبات المحبطة والأوهام الحديثة. كما ينتقد بروفروك صورته الجسدية وطبيعته الفكرية . أن بروفروك يأسف على الفرص الضائعة في حياته وفراغه الروحي الكبير . الحب لبروفروك بمثابة أحلام مهووسة والتي لا يمكن تحقيقها ولا توجد هنالك فرصة لمقدم الحبيب الضائع. يعاني بروفروك من مشاعر معقدة من التعب ، والندم ، والإحراج ، والشوق ، والعجز والإحباط الجنسي ، والشعور بالانحلال ، مع لامبالاة للقيم ، وقد أصبح «بروفروك» أحد أكثر الأصوات شهرة في الأدب الحديث نظرًا لصورته الحقيقية للإنسان الحديث . تتناول الورقة البحثية الموضوع بناءً على نظرية التحليل النفسي لسيغموند فرويد. سيتم تناول مفاهيم الذات والأنا والجزء اللاوعي حسب رؤية علم النفس الحديث ، حيث تظهر هذه المكونات المشاعر المضطربة وردود أفعال بروفروك فيما يتعلق بحياته اليومية.

### **1.1 Biography of T. S. Eliot**

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888 – 1965) was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on September 26, 1888. He was a British essayist, publisher, playwright, literary and social critic, and “one of the twentieth century’s major poets. He lived in St. Louis during the first eighteen years of his life and graduated from Harvard University in 1910 with Master Degree in English Literature. He left the United States and travelled to Paris at Sorbonne University where he studied there for a year. After a year in Paris, he returned to Harvard to pursue a doctorate in philosophy, but returned to Europe and settled in England during the period of 1914-1915. Eliot was an American citizen by birth and he got the British citizenship in

1927. In 1915, he married Vivienne Haigh-Wood, an Englishwoman he had known for three months. Vivienne was a medically and emotionally vexed person, Her troubles included irregular and frequent menstruation, migraines, neuralgia, panic attacks, and, eventually, and addiction to her medication. She was pretty, ambitious, and vivacious. Eliot was handsome, ambitious, and the opposite of Vivienne. They had a hard luck marriage and got divorced a few years after their marriage. Then, Eliot had several love relationships, but, in 1957, at the age of sixty-eight, he married his thirty-year-old secretary, Valerie Fletcher. Eliot was happy in his second marriage, which seems to have been a case of complete love of the married



type.<sup>2</sup>

In 1915, Eliot attracted widespread attention for his poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," which was seen as a masterpiece of the Modernist movement. It was followed by some of the best-known poems in English language, including "The Waste Land" (1932), "The Hollow Men" (1925), and "Ash Wednesday" (1930), Four Quartets (1943). He was also known for his seven plays, Murder in the Cathedral (1935), The Family Reunion (1939), The Cocktail Party (1949), The Confidential Clerk (1954), and The Elder Statesman (1959) which were published in one volume in 1962 asserting his fame as an innovative dramatist with traditional views. Eliot was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature

in 1948. Eliot died of emphysema at his home in Kensington in London, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January 1965, In accordance with his wishes, his ashes were taken to St Michael and All Angels' Church, East Coker, the village in Somerset from which his Eliot ancestors had emigrated to America. A wall plaque in the church commemorates him with a quotation from his poem East Coker: "In my beginning is my end. In my end is my beginning". Still, Eliot is read and discussed widely on continued bases due to his up to date poems and elegant poetic style.<sup>3</sup>

Eliot's main theme of Poetic Image reflected in Mythology and Interior Monologue of Modern Man whose Character is seen as Unstable and fearing personality affected by the

accelerating events of modern life. Eliot makes use of the Mythology’s heritage and returns back to the past characters and events to employ these elements in his poetry. He is influenced by the 17th. Century Metaphysical poets, especially John Donne and the French Symbolist Movement writers. Further, he is regarded as one of the major Imagist Poets of English Poetry due to his use of images in his poems. The influence of William Shakespeare is clearly seen in his literary works. He is influenced by the Christian Culture and themes. Eliot is greatly influenced by Dante’s *Divine Comedy*.<sup>4</sup>

Eliot’s use of imagery is directed to clarifying subtle and spiritual ideas. He is concerned with complexities of modern

civilization and such complexities can be made crystal clear by means of comparison with concrete and physical things. Moreover, they tend to secure the fidelity of the experiences of the poet. Eliot’s images are drawn from various sources such as months and seasons of the year. Then he uses flowers , gardens, water , lake and sea, to assert the wide horizon intensity in his poems. Further, Eliot emphasizes images that are derived from ancient myths both Christians and non-Christian to express his ideas. His poems are rich with images based upon ancient literature and philosophy to highlight the cultural norms and historical heritage for his readers. Eliot comes across the images derived from components of human body to



mimic the modern life change in gestures and human instincts. Furthermore, there are images dealing with paraphernalia of the city streets, fog, smoke chimney etc. that add more density for his poems. Eliot assures in his poems the newly shape of images of sex activities, particularly the perversities of sex. Eliot poems are always rich in images of fire and thunder to mimic the sky and earth components of nature. From a figurative perspective, his poems are filled with satire, irony, comparison and reference to barren and lively references.<sup>5</sup>

**Craig Raine in his *T.S. Eliot Lives and Legacies*, discusses the poetic diction of Eliot in his poems with reference to Arnold as in below:**

In *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933), Eliot demolishes Arnold's poetic pretensions by jeering at Arnold's complaint (to Clough) that the age was 'unpoetical': 'no one can deny that it is of advantage to a poet,' Arnold argued, 'to deal with a beautiful world'. Eliot is sceptical: 'the essential advantage for a poet is not, to have a beautiful world with which to deal: it is to be able to see beneath both beauty and ugliness; to see the boredom, and the horror, and the glory.' As a poetic prescription, this directive is sounding, orotund rather than obviously practicable—and calculated to exceed Arnold's reach.<sup>6</sup>

**1.2 T.S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (1915)**

Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” “is a poem about modern man . The title of the poem is taken from Rudyard Kipling’s poem “The Love Song of Har Dyal,”. T.S.Eliot published his poem in 1915. The poem is composed of 130 lines written in free verse. It starts with an Epigraph taken from the epic narrative poem of Dante’s Divine Comedy - The Inferno. The poem is a dramatic monologue revealing the inner clashing thoughts and feelings of Prufrock. The poem uses the stream of consciousness technique as Prufrock is the speaker and listener at the same time; this in fact shows the conflict inside him as a prototype to

modern man. Eliot refers to religion, mythology, psychology, William Shakespeare, and ancient Greek writers to add versatility for his poem. In the first lines of the poem, Eliot compares the evening with the patient who is placed on the hospital bed in a state of consciousness of his surroundings, yet he is unconscious. Prufrock stands for modern man because he is hesitant, cannot take a decision to propose for marriage to the woman he loves. Prufrock is a young city man, unmarried, middle-aged thin white face man. Seemingly, Prufrock is going to a tea party with his friend and is going to propose for one of the woman attending the party. Still, he is unable to ask her hands because he lacks confidence in himself just like modern



man who loses self-confidence due to the clashing world he is living in. Prufrock wants to start his speech with his woman by talking about his passing through half deserted streets to express his singlehood life. Also, he wants to tell her of the one-night cheap hotels and the cheap restaurants that he has seen in his way to meet her. These scattered images of the city life reflect the image of the city and its importance as a living organism in modern life. Eliot as a contemporary poet uses the city as an image in his poems to mimic modern life and reflect the agonies of modern man.<sup>7</sup>

Prufrock cannot propose to the woman because he is hesitant, fears to act and falls a prey to his inner anxieties and unstable emotions. Prufrock uses

broken sentences and phrases; therefore this fragmentation reflects the development in his psychological state. Prufrock lives a meaningless life. Prufrock is an image representing the cultural decadence and moral degeneration that Eliot equates with the society of modern age. Prufrock is the product of a world suffering from a break with its past cultural heritage, a loss of tradition, a failure of institutional authority, and an unhealthy emphasis on individualism and forget of society. Prufrock stands for modern man who is spiritually lost and religiously empty from within due to materialism and turmoil surroundings. Therefore, the complexity of modern life strongly leaves its outcomes on modern man by then he is left in total lab-

abyrinth.<sup>8</sup>

### **1.3 Modern Man Image in T.S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”**

The poem opens with an Epigraph taken from the epic narrative poem of Dante’s Divine Comedy - The Inferno, in which the speaker, Guido De Montefeltro, reluctantly reveals the reason he is in Hell. While Prufrock finds it difficult to reveal the reason. As in the lines below :

#### **Original Text OF THE EPIGRAPH IN “PRUFROCK” ;**

S’io credesse che mia risposta fosse ,

A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,

Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse,

Ma percioche giammai di questo fondo,

Non torno vivo alcun, s’i’odo il vero,  
Senza tema d’infamia ti rispondo. <sup>9</sup>

#### **TRANSLATION OF THE EPIGRAPH IN “PRUFROCK”**

If I thought that my response would be addressed to one who might go back alive, this flame would shake no more; but since no one ever goes back alive out of these deeps (if what I hear is true), without fear of infamy I answer you. <sup>10</sup>

Montefeltro is in Hell, he is hopeless, disappointed and does not have the desire to speak about his sin. While, Prufrock is unable to speak about his sin in Hell. That is why we find aliena-



tion, suffering, and loneliness in the poem; therefore all these reflect a metaphysical meaning for the psychological conflict inside modern man. Hence the poem is a dramatic monologue the reader can feel the juxtaposition inside Prufrock in his ideas and emotions. Eliot uses the stream of consciousness technique in his poem to highlight the dilemma of Prufrock as a prototype of modern man.<sup>11</sup>

**Eric Sigg in his *The American T. S. Eliot: a study of the early writings*, states that :**

Prufrock's difficulties stem from the familiar Romantic alienation between frustrated subject and unresponsive object, and from an even more traditional estrangement between spirit and flesh. No single term among this

array of polar opposites offers him any satisfaction, since he lacks the strength to force either the mystical or the erotic,

the religious or the sexual moment to its crisis.<sup>12</sup>

Prufrock reveals the clashing ideas of his human psyche in his response to Guido, as he like Guido share a drastic fate in Hell. Moreover, while Guido seems not interested to talk about the reason that brings him to Hell, the case is more complicated with Prufrock as he does not have the motif to speak. Eliot in bringing two contradictory characters reshape the image of modern man who is a prey for his unstable psychological state and turmoil thoughts.

**J. C. C. Mays commented in “Early poems: from “Prufrock” to “Gerontion “ in *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot.*, that:**

Prufrock divides into a *you* and an *I*, a public outward personality and a thinking, inert sensitive self; the dissociation is continually ascribed to a failure of nerve, an essential timidity. Prufrock does not dare to make his visit, just as the speaker in *The Waste Land* fails to address the hyacinth girl and the Hollow Men are transfixed by eyes they dared not meet in dreams. Eliot’s heroes fail to confront their own selfhood from the beginning, whether this is conceived as a Dantesque heart of light or a Conradian heart of darkness.<sup>13</sup>

Eliot starts his journey with his supposedly friend to the tea par-

ty comparing the evening with a motionless patient in a table, as stated in the following lines:

**Let us go then, you and I,**

**When the evening is spread out against the sky**

**Like a patient etherized upon a table;**

**Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,**

**The muttering retreats**

**Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels**

**And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:**

**Streets that follow like a tedious argument**

**Of insidious intent**

**To lead you to an overwhelming question ...**

**Oh, do not ask, “What is it?”**

**Let us go and make our visit.**



Then, Eliot describes the deserted streets during dusk time and the echo of the passersby to assert the melancholic state of city life. These images of the city highlight the turmoil nature of modern life. People are living a routine life that is void of liveliness and despite its continuous motion, yet it seems motionless in reality. The echo returns back to Prufrock reflecting the image of cheap hotels and restaurants that are usually attended by spinster men to assure spinsterhood life of modern man. Eliot in these lines criticizes modern life and modern man hence there is no an actual family in the life of modern man. People prefer to live without a wife and children under the pretext of personal freedom and modernity. By the

end, the years pass them and are left roaming alone in cheap hotels and restaurants.<sup>14</sup>

**Michael Grant in his *T. S. Eliot The Critical Heritage* states that**

Ah, that patient etherized upon the table! It is not the evening only lying there in

such lassitude; it is Mr. Eliot's perpetual spectator; it is the wistful and ironic

evocation of all super-sophisticated persons; it is, alas! our cultured selves at this

late and almost, it would sometimes seem, deliquescent stage of civilisation. Under

the spell of Mr. Eliot's gentle and wavering rhythms we become slightly etherized,

and when the spell has sufficiently o'ercrowed our animal spirits we proceed, at

once investigator and investigated, to inspect our emotions ‘as if a magic lantern

threw the nerves in patterns on a screen’; a doleful piece of introspective dissection,

a lamentable appraisalment. <sup>15</sup>

Eliot examines the de facto status of modern man and how there is a clear cultural cut between the past and the present. People are drifting away from their culture and true past. The up to date life style that is controlled and manipulated by materialism and loose values produce a fable modern community who does not like to be ruled by traditional social norms and values. By the end, we are going to see a deteriorated civilization and scattered human beings in spite of the advanced technologies and

open mindedness of people. Eliot refers that there are women in the tea party who only roam in the room spontaneously and they talk about Michelangelo. However, these women stand for modern women prototype as they do not even who is Michelangelo, what is his art and to what cultural era belongs. These women only move their half- naked bodies from one place to another in the room to show they are well-acquainted with modern life culture and needs. They are empty form inside, shallow minded and vulgar. <sup>16</sup>

**In the room the women come and go**

**Talking of Michelangelo.**

**James E, Miller. *In his T. S. Eliot The Making of An American Poet, states that:***



As in Eliot's other night-wandering city poems, there is no Venus,

but more likely a Circe lurking and luring in the darkness, and no love, but doubtless some kind of sex hidden there somewhere—for a fee. <sup>17</sup>

Eliot describes the yellow fog gliding on the window panes and the yellow smoke rubbing its muzzle on the window panes. He personifies the "Yellow fog" as a lurking cat licking its tale in the corners during the evening time to add city images to general surroundings of the poem. Eliot uses personification in several spots of his poem to give a human attribute to none human thing to highlight his idea of modern life portrayal. The use of colour adds more density to the poem barren

atmospheres, as stated herewith:

**The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,**

**The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,**

**Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,**

**Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,**

**Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,**

**Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,**

**And seeing that it was a soft October night,**

**Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.**

Further, Eliot uses the yellow colour to add more melancholy to the de facto status of modern life that is filled with dreariness and sadness. It is October night and there are house-like phrases

to add more sterility to modern life despite its peaceful- like atmospheres. Further, the yellow colour and sunset time may refer to the desperate feelings on the part of the poem.<sup>18</sup>

**Cristanne Miller in her “Gender, sexuality and the modernist poem” in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Poetry* commented that**

This cacophony of languages runs deep in the modernist sense of experience as being, in Eliot’s words, ‘chaotic, irregular, fragmentary’. Amidst this chaos, however, ‘in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes’, a process Wallace Stevens aptly terms ‘hybridisation’ (‘Mr. Eliot’s *Prelude* with the smell of steaks in passageways, is an instance, in the

sense that the smell of steaks in the Parnassian air is a thing perfectly fulfilling’).<sup>23</sup> The hybridity of the modern idiom and its mobility between different vocabularies and registers thus underwrite the principal structuring devices adopted by modernist poets.<sup>19</sup>

Eliot make use of his characters in the poem to high light the hesitant nature of the Prufrock and naïve sexual feeling of women in the party. The women feel closeness to Prufrock, who from his side feel a past quittance with them, as stated below:

**For I have known them all already, known them all:**

**Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,**

**I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;**



**I know the voices dying with  
a dying fall**

**Beneath the music from a far-  
ther room.**

**So how should I presume?**

**And I have known the eyes al-  
ready, known them all—**

**The eyes that fix you in a for-  
mulated phrase,**

**And when I am formulated,  
sprawling on a pin,**

**When I am pinned and wrig-  
gling on the wall,**

**Then how should I begin**

**To spit out all the butt-ends of  
my days and ways?**

**And how should I presume?**

**And I have known the arms  
already, known them all—**

**Arms that are braceleted and  
white and bare**

**(But in the lamplight, downed  
with light brown hair!)**

**Is it perfume from a dress**

**That makes me so digress?**

**Arms that lie along a table, or  
wrap about a shawl.**

**And should I then presume?**

Prufrock says that he has known these half naked women in the past and has already talked with them. However, the hesitant nature of modern man that is reflected in Prufrock and proves his dried masculinity. Modern man is futile in his love relationships. Modern man is unable to decide when there is an eminent decision is needed. Prufrock has surrendered to his fears and melancholy by postponing his love plea for the woman he loves in the tea party. Prufrock refers to his spinster life to the mornings, evenings, and afternoons. Time

passes heavy on his self because of his spinster hood life. Prufrock feels he is pinned in the wall and his eyes see only a routine life. Boredom is also present in the poem as Prufrock spends his time counting the days and nights in his life aimlessly. <sup>20</sup>

**Jewel Spears Brooker in her “T. S. Eliot: The Contemporary Reviews” commented that there is a psychological realism in T.S. Eliot’s Prufrock as stated :**

Like Mr. Gibson, Mr. Eliot is a psychologist; but his intuitions are keener; his technique subtler. For the two semi-narrative psychological portraits which form the greater and better part of his book, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” and the “Portrait of

a Lady,” one can have little but praise. This is psychological realism, but in a highly subjective or introspective vein; whereas Mr. Gibson, for example, gives us, in the third person, the reactions of an individual to a situation which is largely external (an accident, let us say), Mr. Eliot gives us, in the first person, the reactions of an individual to a situation for which to a large extent his own character is responsible. Such work is more purely autobiographic than the other—the field is narrowed, and the terms are idiosyncratic (sometimes almost blindly so). The dangers of such work are obvious: one must be certain that one’s mental character and idiom are sufficiently close to the norm to be comprehensible or significant. In this respect, Mr.



Eliot is near the border-line. His temperament is peculiar, it is sometimes, as remarked heretofore, almost bafflingly peculiar, but on the whole it is the average hyper-aesthetic one with a good deal of introspective curiosity; it will puzzle many, it will delight a few. Mr. Eliot writes pungently and sharply, with an eye for unexpected and vivid details.,<sup>21</sup>

Eliot describes how Prufrock's life is inactive and futile, as stated:

**And indeed there will be time  
For the yellow smoke that  
slides along the street,**

**Rubbing its back upon the  
window-panes;**

**There will be time, there will  
be time**

**To prepare a face to meet the**

**faces that you meet;**

**There will be time to murder  
and create,**

**And time for all the works and  
days of hands**

**That lift and drop a question  
on your plate;**

**Time for you and time for me,  
And time yet for a hundred in-  
decisions,**

**And for a hundred visions and  
revisions,**

**Before the taking of a toast  
and tea.**

**In the room the women come  
and go**

**Talking of Michelangelo.**

Prufrock says that there is time for doing many things before he can confess his love for the woman in the tea party. A time to meet with the same fac-

es that he is accustomed to meet every day. Then, there is a time to make tea and toast besides to spend spare time in eating. Prufrock says that there is time for the reader and for him to do many things in their day before decide to do something meaningful. Prufrock is a prototype of modern man in his moods and attitudes; therefore what he feels and says lies in the orbit of modern masculinity. The inability to act is a reflective feeling for being lazy in the modern man life. Further, there is a reference for women come and go in the room talking about Michel Angelo, to assure the naïve nature of modern women. These women speak about Michel Angelo , but the do not know anything about him and his art. This shows the shal-

lowness of modern women who only seek show off situations and pompous language.<sup>22</sup>

The poem envisages Prufrock as a frustrated man hopelessly alienated within his imagination away from his community. He seeks love by going to a tea party with his friend hoping he can propose to one of the women he knows there. Unfortunately, Prufrock cannot propose to the woman because he is hesitant, fear to act and falls a prey to his inner anxieties and unstable emotions. Prufrock uses broken sentences and phrases; therefore this fragmentation reflects the development in his psychological state. As referred below:

**And indeed there will be time  
To wonder, “Do I dare?” and,  
“Do I dare?”**



**Time to turn back and descend the stair,**

**With a bald spot in the middle of my hair —**

**(They will say: “How his hair is growing thin!”)**

**My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,**

**My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin —**

**(They will say: “But how his arms and legs are thin!”)**

**John Xiros Cooper , in his *The Cambridge Introduction to T. S. Eliot*, commented that:**

Moreover, the development of the dramatic monologue precisely in that historical moment when interest peaks in the fascinations of personality and in psychology as a discipline is also very suggestive. For Eliot, however, the dramatic monologue is no longer

a vehicle for the exposure of an interesting personality, but an invitation to the reader to experience the dismantling of personality. The monologue invites the reader not simply to observe, but to participate actively in the poet’s creation, from the inside as it were, by reenacting subjectively the world of the persona. Consequently, Prufrock asks a rhetorical question about disturbing the universe. Prufrock is referring to Zeus who is king of gods in Greek Mythology who is able to disturb the universe. Then Prufrock describes the spinster life and its routine style. He walks in the half- empty streets seeing lonely men, dressing in shirts and smoking heavily. These lonely men live a singlehood life which is void of liveliness and comfort. <sup>23</sup>

**Do I dare  
Disturb the universe?  
In a minute there is time  
For decisions and revisions  
which a minute will reverse.  
And how should I begin?  
Shall I say, I have gone at dusk  
through narrow streets  
And watched the smoke that  
rises from the pipes  
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves,  
leaning out of windows? ...**

After that he wishes to have ragged claws walking across the sea; describing the sea as silent to denote inactivity of the sea just like Prufrock and lonely men. Eliot denotes barren life in the sea image and modern life picturesque as well. <sup>24</sup>

**I should have been a pair of  
ragged claws  
Scuttling across the floors of**

**silent seas.**

Prufrock describes how the afternoon sleeps in peace with the evening adding an image of personification for the evening to have long fingers. The sleep and tiredness phrases add more melancholy to the surroundings of the poem. <sup>25</sup>

**And the afternoon, the  
evening, sleeps so peacefully!  
Smoothed by long fingers,  
Asleep ... tired ... or it malingers,  
Stretched on the floor, here  
beside you and me.**

Prufrock goes on his speech about spare time he has to eat cakes and ice cream so the moments might reach its peak and confess his love.



**Should I, after tea and cakes  
and ices,**

**Have the strength to force the  
moment to its crisis?**

Prufrock adds a sense of boredom to the poem by saying that he has time for him to eat cakes and drink tea then even there is extra time for doing other things. These images of home atmospheres envisage the urban futility and void character of modern man.

**Then Rachel Blau Duplessis commented in “ H. D. and Revisionary Myth-Making” , The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Poetry, that:**

Though we could reduce the complexity of these verse-paragraphs by foregrounding their grammatical skeleton (‘Would

it have been worth while . . . If one . . . should say: “That is not what I meant, at all.”), doing so would strip away the dreamy and compulsive repetitions, substitutions and displacements. What are lines 1 and 4 in the first verse-paragraph reappear in the second as lines 1–2. What in the first paragraph is a prepositional phrase that takes up the entire second line (‘After the cups, the marmalade, the tea’) is reformulated in the next verse-paragraph into something swollen over two lines: ‘After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets, / After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor’. And, as if to betray the compulsive gaze that focuses on those ‘skirts that trail along the floor’, the syntax then

breaks away into an independent clause (‘It is impossible to say just what I mean!’) followed by an adversative clause that is both a non sequitur and a painfully lucid self-assessment (‘But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen’) before using repetition to resume the original train of thought (‘Would it have been worth while . . .’). Syntax, here, complements rhythm and diction to create textured and contradictory effects that defy easy summary: complex hypotheticals and conditionals signal an engagement with the world that Prufrock has never had and will never truly have, while digressive prepositional phrases skirt with compulsive avoidance before fixating on a metonym for the source of Prufrock’s terror

(‘after the skirts that trail along the floor’). Viewed in terms of how the two poets deploy poetry’s fundamental components, Pound tends to foreground the elements of diction and rhythm and to minimize that of syntax, whereas Eliot uses keeps all three in a complex and constantly shifting interaction. <sup>26</sup>

**But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,**

**Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter,**

Prufrock adds a sense of religion hood style to the poem by referring to prayer and fasting. Pious life is inserted within the lines by denoting that his head is put in platter . Eliot refers to the head of a Prophet of the Jews who is killed and his head is given



on a plate as a gift for a prostitute. Prufrock says that anyhow, he is not a prophet and the confess of love is not a great matter . By the end, Prufrock feels his luck moment is close and have seen the waiter hold his coat with smile. Still, Prufrock feels afraid of the try in love. <sup>27</sup>

**I am no prophet — and here's  
no great matter;**

**I have seen the moment of  
my greatness flicker,**

**And I have seen the eternal  
Footman hold my coat, and  
snicker,**

**And in short, I was afraid.**

Rachel Blau Duplessis commented in "*H. D. and Revisionary Myth-Making* ", *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Poetry*, that " If we compare 'The Return' with a portion of

'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', completed a year earlier in the summer of 1911, we discern some critical differences. Consider two verse-paragraphs from the poem's third part, as Prufrock reaches a crisis in his deliberations. <sup>28</sup>

**And would it have been worth  
it, after all,**

**After the cups, the marmalade,  
the tea,**

**Among the porcelain, among  
some talk of you and me,**

**Would it have been worth  
while,**

**To have bitten off the matter  
with a smile,**

**To have squeezed the universe  
into a ball**

**To roll it towards some  
overwhelming question,**

To say: “I am Lazarus, come  
from the dead,

Come back to tell you all, I  
shall tell you all”—

If one, settling a pillow by her  
head

Should say: “That is not what  
I meant at all;

That is not it, at all.”

And would it have been worth  
it, after all,

Would it have been worth  
while,

After the sunsets and the  
dooryards and the sprinkled  
streets,

After the novels, after the  
teacups, after the skirts that trail  
along the floor—

And this, and so much  
more?—

It is impossible to say just  
what I mean!

But as if a magic lantern  
threw the nerves in patterns on  
a screen:

Would it have been worth  
while

If one, settling a pillow or  
throwing off a shawl,

And turning toward the win-  
dow, should say:

“That is not it at all,

That is not what I meant, at  
all.”

John Xiros Cooper , in his *The  
Cambridge Introduction to T. S.  
Eliot*, commented that:

“The Love Song of J. Alfred  
Prufrock” operates in the same  
psychometrical regions as “Por-  
trait of a Lady,” but with greater  
penetration and reach. In one re-  
spect the poem has already seen  
past the psychological construc-



tion of the self: although psychology was a new discipline at that time, Eliot even then anticipated a postmodern construction of personal identity. <sup>29</sup>

Thus, the lines below add more self- description for Prufrock:

**No! I am not Prince Hamlet,  
nor was meant to be;**

**Am an attendant lord, one  
that will do**

**To swell a progress, start a  
scene or two,**

**Advise the prince; no doubt,  
an easy tool,**

**Deferential, glad to be of use,**

**Politic, cautious, and meticu-  
lous;**

**Full of high sentence, but a bit  
obtuse;**

**At times, indeed, almost ridic-  
ulous—**

**Almost, at times, the Fool.**

Prufrock compares himself to Prince Hamlet who is hesitant to kill his Uncle King Claudius who has murdered his father King Hamlet and Got married to his mother Queen Gertrude . Prufrock says that he is even not working as a servant in the Palace or being used by the Kings. Though he is happy to be used by the kings and queens. Still, he has time to play the fool in his life. This refers that Eliot is affected by William Shakespeare's writings and characters. The images that Eliot portray are well-netted to the extent the modern readers are bewildered on the interior monologue of the poem. <sup>30</sup>

The closing lines of the poem describe the mental state of Prufrock besides his prospected status in life:

**I grow old ... I grow old ...  
I shall wear the bottoms of  
my trousers rolled.**

**Shall I part my hair behind?  
Do I dare to eat a peach?**

**I shall wear white flannel trou-  
sers, and walk upon the beach.**

**I have heard the mermaids  
singing, each to each.**

**I do not think that they will  
sing to me.**

**I have seen them riding sea-  
ward on the waves**

**Combing the white hair of the  
waves blown back**

**When the wind blows the wa-  
ter white and black.**

**We have lingered in the cham-  
bers of the sea**

**By sea-girls wreathed with  
seaweed red and brown**

**Till human voices wake us,  
and we drown.**

Prufrock is saying that time passes him and is getting old in age. He shall wear his trousers in a way that reflects his boredom and absurdness. Furthermore, he shall have his hair part behind. Prufrock refers to the singing of the mermaids, each to each, not for him. Also, Prufrock refers to the sea girls and their swimming clothes red and brown in colour to add more sexuality and nudity to the part of the poem.

**Zulfikar Ghose, in his *Ham-  
let, Prufrock and language* ,  
commented that :**

To say nothing of Prufrock who came to ‘the chambers of the sea’ and heard the mermaids singing. In

enchantments, and then in re-  
finements, of language, there’s



madness. Seeking an immersion in something other than the self, burdened by overwhelming questions, we drown ourselves in words. And, of course, the ecstasy leaves me when I emerge from the ocean and the sand sticks between my toes, the illusion of comprehension goes when the man frying fish on a fire of driftwood calls to his children playing on the beach, proving the banal utility of words, that former delicious abstraction quite lost, that beautiful, intoxicating ache in one's limbs induced by the water only a memory. The music was illusory, even the sea-shell you pick up releases no whisper from its hollow chamber, and you throw it back, a dead object. Life goes on, people eating deep-fried fish, repeating clichés about

the weather, pointing to clouds which, they insist, resemble seals or sealions or whales.<sup>31</sup>

**John Xiros Cooper , in his *The Cambridge Introduction to T. S. Eliot*, commented that:**

Prufrock, like Byron, devotes “immense trouble to becoming a role” (205, italics in original), but, unlike Byron, Prufrock, performing what is now a clownish routine, can no longer carry of “such a useless and petty purpose” with the heroic persistence of a Byron (203). In the hundred years that separate Prufrock from Childe Harold, Byron's heroic masquerade subverts the whole of society but with its heroism in tatters. Prufrock does not exist except as a personality saturated in the vapid egoism that per-

vades masculinity at every level, from its sociopolitical heights, in a character like the “romantic aristocrat” George Wyndham (comically deflated by Eliot in *The Sacred Wood*, 24–32), down to the faceless, sad clerks in *oYces*. This conscious exploration of the self as a “deliberate fabrication” does not actually begin with Eliot.<sup>32</sup>

May Sinclair (1870–1946), an established English novelist, urged that “Prufrock” and “Portrait of a Lady” were “masterpieces.” “Eliot’s genius,” she wrote, was “disturbing”: “It is elusive; it is difficult; it demands a distinct effort of attention.” Yet she concluded that “if there is anything more astounding and more assured than his performance it is his promise.”<sup>33</sup>

Edgar Jepson (1863–1938), an American novelist who resided in London, also praised the volume: “It is new in form, as all genuine poetry is new in form; it is musical with a new music, and that without any straining after newness. The form and music are a natural, integral part of the poet’s amazingly fine presentation of his vision of the world.”<sup>34</sup>

**J. C. C. Mays commented in his “*Early poems: from “Prufrock” to “Gerontion” in *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot.*, that:***

“Prufrock” was both beginning and end, an entire poetic career wrapped up in a single poem. That he knew what he was doing and knew what he had done becomes obvious, I think, when Eliot repeats the invocation to



urban night walking and observation in the familiar compound ghost scene of *Little Gidding*, thus in his final poem beginning all over again and in so doing recalling his original beginning in his first poem. Moreover, Eliot thought of *Little Gidding*, too, as his “swan song” (the valedictory note is strong throughout Eliot’s career) — and this time he was right. And what do we have as subject matter, in the end as in the beginning, but Yeats’s “remorse, lost love, or mere loneliness,” elements that are at once both personal and thematic? The only thing that relieves the loneliness, which we must judge from the poetry was a lifelong experience for Eliot (at least until his second marriage, but that occurred well after the conclu-

sion of the Life of the Poet), is the split into “you and I” or into speaker and compound ghost. Such a split, which permits the poet to render his observations and at the same time to record the story of himself observing, is everywhere characteristic of Eliot who, thus doubled, becomes (in Yeats’s term) “part of his own phantasmagoria.”<sup>35</sup>

### **Conclusion**

T. S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” is a dramatic monologue written to express the anxieties and emotional status of a modern young man called Prufrock. This man is going to a tea party where he is going to meet his girlfriend. At the tea party, Prufrock would like to confess his love for her. Still, the party ends and he is unable to do so due to his hesitation and unstable psychological state. The emotional clashes and mental disturbed ideas that gathered inside Prufrock at the time of the tea party show the readers a prototype of modern man. Hesitation and alienation are common features inside modern man. To live alone and count the days and nights with absurdist state

mean that Prufrock is suffering too much. This way of turbulent surroundings leave him anxious and cannot take a decision when decision is needed.

Eliot in his “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” is able to portray a prototype of modern man image who is alive mixture of newly trends and a void masculinity. That is why the produced manhood is not that texture needed for upgrading simple human life. The life of modernity is complicated in its outcomes and changing incidents on daily bases. This leaves people in utter labyrinth. Prufrock is deeply affected by this modernism. He is not able to cope with the newly findings of urban life besides that the cultural change is huge. However, the shallow mindedness



of modern women adds more futility to the part of the poem scene. Women come and go on the room talking of Michel Angelo , still they do not know him and unaware of his art. These women are interested on the pompous phrases and echoing names to show they are educated and well-experienced, but they are not. Further, modern man who is reflected in Prufrock shows that such people live a routine life with a barren outcome. Time is not important for them and the spinsterhood life style adds more boredom for their life hew. Finally, Eliot comes up to his readers with a model of an everlasting poem that is worth reading and interesting in content and style.

### Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Eric, Sigg. *The American T. S. Eliot: a study of the early writings*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 183-184.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 183-184..

<sup>4</sup> Michael, Grant. *T. S. Eliot The Critical Heritage*. (London: Taylor and Francis e-Library Press, 2005), 101-102.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 101-102.

<sup>6</sup> Craig Raine, *T.S. Eliot Lives and Legacies* , (Oxford: Oxford

University Press, 2006), 87-88.

<sup>7</sup> Eliot’s Poetry “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” Summary <https://www.sparknotes.com/poetry/eliot/section1/> Retrieved on 14/02/2022

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> T. S. Eliot , *Collected Poems 1909 – 1962* , (New york: Harcourt~ Brace & World, Inc. Press, 1963), 12 – 17. Further quotes to the poem appear parenthetically in the text with Page number.

<sup>10</sup> Zulfikar, Ghose, *Hamlet, Prufrock and language* , (London : The Macmillan Press, 1978), 50-51.

<sup>11</sup>Eliot’s Poetry “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” Summary <https://www.sparknotes.com/poetry/eliot/section1/> Retrieved on 14/02/2022

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<sup>14</sup> John Xiros Cooper , *The Cambridge Introduction to T. S. Eliot.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 108-120.

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<sup>16</sup> Ronald Schuchard, *Eliot’s Dark Angel Intersections of Life and Art.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 22-68.

<sup>17</sup> James E, Miller. *T. S. Eli-*

*ot The Making of An American Poet.* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 154-155.

<sup>18</sup> Jewel Spears Brooker , *T. S. Eliot: The Contemporary Reviews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1-17.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Cristanne Miller “*Gender, sexuality and the modernist poem”*, in Alex Davis and Lee M Jenkins ,eds , *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Poetry.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 73-74.

<sup>20</sup> J. C. C. Mays, “*Early poems: from “Prufrock” to »Gerontion “* in *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot.*, ed. A. David Moody , (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994),108-120.

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<sup>27</sup> J. C. C. Mays, “Early poems: from “Prufrock” to »Gerontion “ in *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot.*, ed. A. David Moody , (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994),108-120.

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<sup>30</sup> Lawrence Rainey ed., *The Annotated Waste Land with Eliot's Contemporary Prose*, (Yale: Yale University Press, 2005), 19-20.

<sup>31</sup> Zulfikar, Ghose, *Hamlet, Prufrock and language*, (London: The Macmillan Press, 1978), 3-4.

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