

Landscape in the love song of j. alfred prufrock by t. s. eliot

[Life](#), [Love](#)



Landscape in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” by T. S. Eliot Although the full meaning within T. S. Eliot’s dense poem “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” proves difficult to grasp, the deep meaning packed into every word makes the pursuit to understanding this poem a never-ending adventure.

Scenery in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” represents an intensely psychological account which should never, in any instance, be taken literally.

The loss of time, the confusion of past, present and future tenses, the static movement, and the eternal metaphor of the question produces this psychological scenery which in turn amplifies the intensity of the poem. Time in “Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” plays a very important part in creating the landscape of the main character’s narration. The overwhelming sense of being caught in time begins within the first three lines after the epigraph: “Let us go then, you and I,/When the evening is spread out against the sky/Like a patient etherized upon a table;”.

Just like a patient anesthetized by ether, the narrator appears trapped in a space of vulnerability at the mercy of others without the existence of time. Also, the association of the sky with an object as non-moving as a stone evokes a space in which the sky or the atmosphere has no movement: the loss of physical time. Time, in the case of the poem, appears endless (“And indeed there will be time.” pg. 4) as consequence to the narrator’s psychological state of “stuckness” and the sense of time becomes warped in confusion and solitude.

J. Alfred Prufrock’s isolation also represents a loss of time within the poem. The repetition of “And indeed there will be time...There will be time, there

will be time...And indeed there will be time" alludes, once again, to a landscape without time. Also phrases such as " In the room the women come and go/ Talking of Michelangelo" use repetition for the purposes of emphasizing Prufrock's monotonous existence and solitude without an attempt of improvement. . In addition, J.

Hillis Miller explains: Like the women talking of Michelangelo, he exists in an eternal present, a frozen time in which everything that might possibly happen to him is as if it had already happened: " For I have known them all already, known them all" (CP, 4). In this time of endless repetition Prufrock cannot disturb the universe even if he should presume to try to do so. Everything that might happen is foreknown, and in a world where only one mind exists the foreknown has in effect already happened and no action is possible.

Prufrock's observation but lack of contribution emphasizes his state of solitude, and his consistent lack of contribution throughout the remainder of the poem demonstrates the impaired movement in the poem. Similarly, the confusion of tense also demonstrates a landscape without the existence of time. Confusion of tenses in " The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" substantiates the feeling of immaterial space such as when:

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes 1 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, 4 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. 4) 8 The first two lines describe the fog in present tense, but the third in past tense. In the fourth line, Prufrock begins with past tense (Lingered upon the pools) and continues in present tense (that stand in the drains). The fifth line makes the same change in tenses and the remainder of the stanza continues in past tense. Space, explains J. Hillis Miller, “ must be exterior to the self if movement through it is to be more than the following of a tedious argument in the mind.

In the same way only an objective time can be other than the self, so that the flow of time can mean change for that self”, therefore time has only a subjective existence for J. Alfred Prufrock. Subsequently, past, present, and future exist in the immediate moment. Static movement in “ The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” plays an important role in emphasizing the state of the poem’s landscape. Essentially, J. Alfred Prufrock admits to knowing the lack of movement when “ In a minute there is time/ For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse”.

The narrator’s message that no matter what he does, there will never by change emphasizes a desperation to move which the character’s subconscious inhibits by habit and indecision. Monotony due to proclivity when “ For I have known them all already, known them all:—/Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons, / I have measured my life with coffee spoons;” demonstrates invariability in the narrators mind because all he points out having done exists in the mind: known the everyday routine, and measured every moment of his life in his mind.

In addition to the narrator's self-assessed lack of movement, Prufrock's narration places him in a less-than-human position when he says, " I should have been a pair of ragged claws/ Scuttling across the floors of silent seas". That Prufrock compares his monotonous existence as being equal to that of a crab in the silence and stillness of the ocean floor directly demonstrates his deadlocked existence.

The continuance of the " unanswerd question" also demonstrates mental deadlock because although the " overwhelming question" crops up multiple times throughout the poem, the narrator does not or cannot explain the question, nor does an answer arise. The lack of progress demonstrates an eternal present in " The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock". In addition to the endless time in " The Love Song of J.

Alfred Prufrock" the metaphor of the question symbolizes the barrier between Prufrock's mind and the outside world. The actual unanswered question throughout the story may demonstrate a lack of movement, but it extends much farther than a question. All that is miscommunication and incommunicable acts as an extension to the significance of the question. Throughout the poem, Prufrock's struggle to communicate with both the characters in his mind and the reader demonstrates his self-acknowledged impotence.

The inability to communicate when Prufrock says, " In the room the women come and go/ Talking of Michelangelo"(4) demonstrates the barrier between Prufrock and society because Prufrock never approaches the characters of which he speaks, he only watches from an unknown distance in an unknown

location. Although Prufrock does not approach these figures of society, the moments there is communication demonstrates social flaw. J.

Hillis Miller explains that “ Prufrock's vision is incommunicable, and whatever he says to the lady will be answered by, ‘ That is not what I meant at all. /That is not it, at all’. The lady is also imprisoned in her own sphere, and the two spheres can never, like soap bubbles, become one. Each is impenetrable to the other”. The last five stanzas of the poem show a change in scenery which seems to switch to the seaside and then into the “ chambers of the sea” which restores his original wish to have been a creature of the sea.

This scene also demonstrates the consequences of attempted communication between the outside world and the narrator when: “ We have lingered in the chambers of the sea/ By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown/ Till human voices wake us, and we drown”. This passage, especially the end line, displays the effect of outside vitiation on Prufrock’s mental state. The result of drowning as consequence to the human voices isolates the bubble that is the narrator’s existence from the outside world which, once penetrated, can no longer function. The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” captures the landscape inside the mind of the narrator through many subtle and abstract ways. The intense meaning of the poem captured through the mind of the character uses the loss of time, the confusion of past, present and future tenses, the static movement, and the eternal metaphor of the question in order to produce an intensely psychological landscape. The obvious amount of thought and effort embedded in the

language of “ the Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” demonstrates the great meaning seen within Eliot’s poetry.