

The love song of j. alfred prufrock and preludes essay sample

[Literature](#), [Poetry](#)



Eliot challenges his audience to consider the state of his character's subconscious living within a corrupted society. Thomas Stearns Eliot's poems, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* published in 1915, and *Preludes* published in 1917, resonate the decay and alienation of Eliot's characters and civilization. Eliot employs various poetic techniques to challenge the reader to explore social fragmentation of the human psyche and the futility of an industrialization society.

Eliot explores seclusion and social fragmentation through the experiences of the persona in his poem, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. The form of the poem is fragmented, containing an unequal number of lines with variable speech rhythms highlighting the confusion and anxiety of Prufrock due to his social isolation. Eliot incorporates various poetic forms including elements of sonnet, iambic pentameter and pastiche. The rhyming scheme in the poem is constantly changing enforcing a disjointed flow of rhythm and tone to the poem, reflecting fragmentation as the persona's thoughts spontaneously shift from one emotion to another. Eliot's use of catachresis in the line, " Let us go then, you and I, when the evening is spread out against the sky like a patient etherized upon a table" juxtaposes the beauty commonly associated with the night sky with numbness and decay of a comatose patient.

The contrasting images denote fragmentation as it demonstrates Prufrock's disordered psychological state, as he cannot conform with society, thus causing him to be an outcast. Eliot applies synecdoche in the line, " to prepare a face to meet the faces you meet" to exemplify Prufrock's detachment from society as he is a broken identity. Eliot decontextualizes

parts of the body rather than representing people as a whole identity, indicating social fragmentation in which humans are 'parts' that constitute society. The metaphor in the line, "When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall" refers to the pinning of insect samples for study, implying that the persona feels likewise scrutinized by society. Prufrock's solitude is revealed as he is depicted as being pinned by social propriety, highlighting the struggle to act in accordance with social expectations causing him to be a fragment on the borders of society. Eliot explores the severe experiences of Prufrock in order to induce the reader to consider the deeper feelings of the character.

Similarly, Eliot's poem Preludes provides the reader an insight into the fragmentation of the human psyche. The structure of the poem is divided into four separate cantos that depict different scenes at different times of the day. The irregular rhyming scheme and the enjambment layout presents the persona's detachment and marginalisation as the character's perspective differs. The tone of the persona is constantly changing through each scene. The first canto begins with a relaxed tone where sibilance and olfactory imagery is employed in "smells of steaks" to signify gentleness and sombreness of the persona. However, the soothing tone is quickly juxtaposed with the aggressive, distant tone of the character in the second stanza through the use of plosive alliteration of 'broken blinds', which imitates the strong, thudding noise of an object falling to pieces.

The extreme changes of the tone of the persona displays his broken identity as he strives to find relief in his lonely, city life. The fourth canto represents

the struggle of the persona to conserve his spirit and individuality as they are opposed by modern society symbolised by the “blackened street”. The persona’s struggle with conforming to modern society is depicted through negative imagery and personification in the line “...soul stretched tight across the skies” implying that the persona is stressed because society is forcing him to lose his personal beliefs and morals in order to be socially acceptable. Eliot employs synecdoche in “insistent feet” which displays humans as incomplete and fragmented as their lives embody modern society. As proven above, Eliot successfully depicts the experiences of his characters, which challenges the audience to understand the fragmented psyche of humans.

Moreover, Eliot dares the reader to delve into the ills of the modern world caused by the industrial revolution in his poem, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. The visual imagery of the “half-deserted streets”, “cheap hotels” and “sawdust restaurants” demonstrate how industry has pervaded every corner of human life. The descriptive language and gloomy tone negatively connotes the isolation of modern cities as humanity becomes secluded and empty. The application of metaphor and cat imagery in “the yellow fog... rubs its back upon the window panes” portrays the modern city as stifling and claustrophobic and the colour symbolism implies death and decay, as modern life grows futile.

The descriptive language provides the reader with an insight of how Prufrock views the world he lives in and how society has become barren and corrupted. The absurd imagery and metaphor evident in “I have measured

out my life in coffee spoons” highlights how Prufrock lives his life in small, measured amounts. The spoons are a direct link to mechanization and mass production that highlight the unfulfilled, mundane modern world, where everything is a copy of another and individuality is unseemly. The repetition of the line “ women come and go talking of Michelangelo” suggests that the modern world is meaningless and monotonous as society is concerned with trivial and dull ideas. Through various poetic techniques, Eliot provokes the audience to assess the corruption of society due to industrialisation.

Eliot comparably reveals to the reader the desolate nature of society in his poem, Preludes. The negative imagery of decay and degeneration demonstrated in “ grimy scraps” and “ withered leaves”, reveal a corrupted society together with the plosive alliteration reinforcing the destruction within a community. Society is depicted as hollow and purposeless evident in the metaphor “ The burnt-out ends of smoky days” which symbolises human life as cigarettes; slowly deteriorating and polluting the world. The ends of cigarettes are eventually discarded, as it becomes useless suggesting that life is temporary and empty. The juxtaposition of the bizarre imagery in the line, “ The morning comes to consciousness” implies lethargy and gloom as modern cities become overwhelmed with routines and trivial activities. The personification indicates that even the sun does not want to appear in the dreary modern world to serve as a source of life and energy. The distorted images in “ And you heard the sparrows in the gutter” similarly demote the beauty of nature suggesting that society is unpleasant and artificial as it conceals nature behind the industrialization of modern cities. In his poem,

Eliot encourages the reader to investigate the problems of society through various literary devices.

Ultimately, Eliot invites his readers to explore the experiences of his characters as well as the problems of society in order for the audience to re-examine their personal attitudes and ideals. Eliot skilfully communicates to his readers through complex poetic devices such as, imagery, catachresis and symbolism.