

The love song of j alfred prufrock by t.s. elliot

Literature



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In *The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock*, T. S. Elliot employs both pessimistic and mundane s to portray the feeling of alienation and dysfunction facing many city dwellers at the beginning of the twentieth century. This style of writing was in direct opposition to the optimism and happy outlook popular to the previous Victorian Era. Modernism and the development of a city culture brought with it feelings of losing ones self, and many writers began to question the previous ideas of a society and how to function within it. Modernist writers hoped to expose the false ideals of conventional thinking and to show truth to those that were subjected and arbitrary. Throughout the poem, Elliot imposes questions upon the reader, making them think outside of normal and everyday thoughts. While many of the inquiries seem simple to generic thought, others are very philosophical and too difficult for even Elliot to answer. *The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock* is a perfect example of Modernist Literature because it brings into question the ways of life that are accepted by society, offering a different way of seeing things and in turn a different way of living.

Often Prufrock's queries are lost to those he encounters. It is almost as if he exists in his own personal sphere and his ways of thinking are not understood by others. For example Prufrock's thoughts are lost to the woman who props her head up on the pillow saying " That is not what I meant at all. That is not it at all" (1527). Then in frustration he proclaims " It is impossible to say exactly what I mean" (1527). Throughout the poem it is questioned whether or not Prufrock ever leaves his room at all. It appears that he does not because his will is so strong and he says " for a hundred indecisions, And for a hundred visions and revisions, Before the taking of a <https://assignbuster.com/the-love-song-of-j-alfred-prufrock-by-ts-elliott/>

toast and tea" (1525). It is almost as if the mundane routine and constant pressure to conform so forced upon Victorian Society has caused Prufrock to retreat into his mind. His mind decides his reality and his own ways of thinking depict how he sees the world. Elliot uses Prufrock as an example for readers to see what it would be like to be different and to question ideals that had been forced down their throats.

Another Modernist approach Elliot uses is that the true genders of the subjects are hidden from the reader. By avoiding the envisionment of a female the reader is unable to define a gender for the bodies Prufrock describes. Just as the entire poem asks an unanswerable question, the one whom Prufrock is addressing is also unanswerable. The woman, or supposed woman, with whom Prufrock imagines encountering, is only described in bits and pieces and even those bits and pieces are vague. He describes arms with bracelets and flowing skirts which make the subject seemingly female, but the eyes and voice are undefining of sex. Elliot also describes human bodies as landscapes of the city like the sky, street, and fog. For example he gives aspects of the city human characteristics, " yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window panes, yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window panes, licked its tongue into the corners of the evening, lingered upon the pools" (1525). Modernist thought doesn't concern itself with the gender of human beings because it doesn't believe that gender had anything to do with who a person is. Gender doesn't affect the way one thinks or the way they live.

Prufrock fears and doubts the traditional way of living and questions how he
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should live his life. While many of his questions are simple like: " Do I dare eat a peach" or " shall a part my hair from behind" (1528). Others are far more complicated such as " And how should I begin" and " How should I presume" (1526). Either way they are all different ways of thinking and challenge the reader to think outside of what normal society believes to be true. Elliot truly displays Modern thought in this poem, questioning everything about modern life and what it means to live it.