

Urban alienation

Life



How have three of the texts you have studied provided insight into the individual's relationships to the urban landscape? The three texts; T. S. Eliot's *The Preludes* poem, Jennifer Strauss' *Migrant Woman on a Melbourne Tram* poem and the short story *The Pedestrian* by Ray Bradbury, provide an insight into each individual's relationship with the urban landscape through the underlying motif of urban alienation. The writers explore the alienating effect of city life as people are forced to suppress and hide their individual identity by conforming to societal expectations, as well as the

Idea of examining the universal nature of human despair and Isolation through their depiction of soulless, disconnected and oppressive society. T. S. Eliot shows the alienating and disconnection with the urban landscape which is explored in *The Preludes* as people are forced to suppress and hide their individual identity by conforming to societal expectations of wealth city life. Eliot, who was a modernist poet, revolted against traditional literary forms and subjects. About the decay of modern civilization, he shared the ideas of pessimism, disillusionment and futility.

As a reaction to World War I, Eliot describes the metropolis as a place where people physically live, not emotionally live. Throughout the poem there is use of enjambment to render the contemporary disorder and lack of coherence of people's daily lives in the modern city. Alliteration is skillfully used creating emphasis on the imagery of gusty and grimy and the harshness of the rain being described as 'beat on broken blinds'. The city itself is a metaphor or reflection of people's daily lives and inner psyches as they become consumed within the landscape.

The second prelude deals with the personal pain that is so well hidden which is metaphorically presented through the idea of a 'masquerade'. This pain is shown to be an effect and common lifestyle of this broken city which is shared 'in a thousand furnished rooms'. In Preludes three and four look at false pretences. Eliot uses the repetition of the conjunction 'and' to further emphasize the drabness of routine and the endless cycle of existence. There is a sense of prediction and pace through the times four and five and six o'clock' as if trapped in this mechanical routine.

People are in the deceitful form of 'certain certainties' contained in monotonous activities like 'fingers of stuffing pipes'. It ends with a sense of emptiness and a sense of searching. The Preludes addresses the need to break the "chains" or cycle of a personal fixation within the isolation as well as frustration of city life in order to create a stronger relationship with the urban environment. Similarly, "The Pedestrian" explores alienating effects of city life as people are forced to suppress and hide their Individual Identity by conforming to societal expectations, where the Individual lacks feeling of longing and connectivity. "The Pedestrian" is set AD 2053 in the dystopian future. Leonard Mead is the individual who is at odds with his society as he who recognizes the world as soulless and. His world has no divine order and is a futile, anarchic place - where the protagonist's name is also very average and ordinary. There is a recurring motif of the dead. People are metaphorically described as deadened and zombie-like or associated with the negative connotation of 'grey phantoms' living in a monotonous and emotionless world.

People are trapped and locked inside tomb-like monotony attached with urban living as Leonard goes about his routine he says What's up tonight on Channel 4, Channel 7 and Channel 9? Due to advances in technology, the city dwellers' ability to think for themselves is lost as they become brainwashed and confined to their living rooms watching television, into a dehumanized state. The onomatopoeia and emotive terms Whispering... Murmurs' are both associated with spying or secrets. This suggests Leonard is not conforming to the laws of his society.

The harshness and sterility of the robot's 'metallic' voice idiotically repeats the questions directed to Leonard, asking Walking where? For what? As well as the inability to understand his 'profession' shows an emotionless and artificial world taken over by ever developing technology. This is juxtaposed between Lemonade's warmth and humor where he replies with a smile 'nobody wanted me'. Similarly with T. S. Eliot's The Preludes, in The Pedestrian there are feelings of isolation and being misunderstood by the changing urban society where the world is isolating in cultural and individual identity through the suppressive and conformity.

Following the concept of the individual being psychologically "chained", the Migrant Woman on a Melbourne Tram reflects Jennifer Strauss' relationship with the urban landscape examined through the portrayal of an illegal alien, where she experiences displacement and anonymity in a foreign urban metropolis. The migrant woman is portrayed as one who 'hunches' while being described as 'sweltering with twists in sweating hands'. Further embodying a sense of discomfort is through the rash alliteration of 's'.

We see the woman as being caught between two cultures; she becomes consumed by the city and forlorn in foreign words and voices'. The effective use of alliteration has a solemn tone which evokes a sense of hopelessness as they 'echo'. Furthermore; there is a sense of desperation to understand situation. The migrant woman has to break through the language barrier to overcome a loss and lack of cultural identity. There is a threatening and uneasy tone established through the repetition of 'Impossibly black... Luminosity obscure... Luminosity dark... Possibly departed'. This accumulates and creates an unsettled atmosphere while reflecting the individual's confusion and isolation. This also relates to the women's attire, standing out while being juxtaposed with the sexualities nature of the 'impudence of summer thighs/long arms and painted toenails'. This synecdoche may act as a mean to create emphasis on the two contrasting cultures and expose the reader through the notion of the feelings of displacement and complete alienation, which is what the migrant woman would be experiencing.

Strauss makes an allusion to Greek hydrology through her reference to the story of Theseus and the Minotaur. The migrant woman's almost 'daunting' and foreboding' feat of making her navigation through an unknown culture alludes to Theseus being sent and fed to the Minotaur. The migrant woman is 'sacrificing herself to this newfound culture and leaving behind her past. The 'blind beast' may perhaps also signify the industrialized and modern-aged city, 'devouring or consuming the newly arrived immigrants which correlates with the metaphor of 'eating up men'.

The Preludes and The Pedestrian respond to the ideas shown in the Migrant Woman on a Melbourne Tram in providing an insight to Jennifer Strauss'

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soulless, disconnected and oppressive relationship with the urban landscape. In the three texts, the readers are provided underlying motif of urban alienation. The ideas explored are when people are forced to suppress and hide their individual identity by conforming to societal expectations, as well as the idea of examining the universal nature of human despair and isolation through their depiction of a soulless, disconnected and oppressive society.