

T.s. eliot: symbolism as the sign of poetic wholeness essay

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Abstract T. S.

Eliot is considered “ one of the most daring innovators of twentieth-century poetry” (The Nobel Foundation, 1998). He truly believed that the essence of poetry was in reflecting the complexities of contemporary society and the globalizing civilization. He recognized that such reflection required using a difficult poetic language, but nevertheless his poetic works were well-known and understandable to the public. His Love of J. Alfred Prufrock is heavily impacted by his philosophic works, and reflects a typical contemporary individual, who has the name, who has a dream, but who nevertheless is lost among the multiplicity of symbols, fears, and prejudices, which separate him from his romantic essence and drown him in reality. T. S. Eliot: Symbolism as the Sign of Poetic Wholeness Introduction: an insight into T.

S. Eliot’s biography Thomas Stearns Eliot was born in 1888 in St. Louis, in the family of Henry Ware Eliot - the president of the Hydraulic-Press Brick Company (The Nobel Foundation, 1998). His mother was an energetic woman, a former teacher, and an excellent social work volunteer, with a wonderful taste to poetry.

Eliot was the seventh child in his family; by the time he was born his parents found themselves in prosperous mid-forties, and due to serious health problems he was always the center of his family’s attention. He studied at Harvard and his early student experiences gave him a feeling of being “ a New Englander in the Southwest” with a clear sense of belonging to neither of his two homes (Bush, 1999). His student years were marked with the growing interest toward literature, and Jules Laforgue’s poetry has become

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the gateway to his complex world of poetic associations. As a postgraduate student in Paris, he was further fascinated by philosophy of consciousness, and his postgraduate experiences deeply influenced his writing style – filled with conservatism, neoclassical philosophic beliefs and symbolism.

In 1915 T. S. Eliot married Vivien Haigh-Wood and moved to London. His *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917) and *The Waste Land* (1919) marked his transition from amateur to professional world of recognized poets. In 1923, Eliot was recruited by Geoffrey Faber to become a literary editor; the new job saved him from a serious emotional breakdown. In the second half of his professional career, he was appointed the director of Faber & Faber, and was an exclusive editor of the popular literary journal *Criterion*.

In 1957, he was married for the second time, and died in 1965 in London. His commemorative plaque carries the words taken from one of his works: “ In my beginning is my end. In my end is my beginning” (Bush, 1999).

T. S. Eliot: literary works Eliot is considered “ one of the most daring innovators of twentieth-century poetry” (The Nobel Foundation, 1998). He truly believed that the essence of poetry was in reflecting the complexities of contemporary society and the globalizing civilization. He recognized that such reflection required using a difficult poetic language, but nevertheless his poetic works were well-known and understandable to the public. He was greatly affected by Symon’s *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*; his early “ Preludes” and “ Portrait of a Lady”, followed by “ Rhapsody on a Windy Night” were known for overwhelming symbolism, alienation, and the curious

search for the unconscious. “ Their effect was both unique and compelling, and their assurance staggered his contemporaries who were privileged to read them in manuscript” (Bush, 1999).

T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* was the product of his continuous work – the unique combination of postwar disillusionment and the revelation of the modern world culture. He spent years writing drama. *Sweeney Agonistes* (1932), *The Cocktail Party* (1949), and *The Confidential Clerk* (1950) signified Eliot’s recognition as a playwright, but never outstripped his reputation of a poet. Throughout the years, and in the light of numerous successful dramatic works, his *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* remains the masterpiece of his poetic inspiration and true poetic wholeness (Bush, 1999).

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*
is probably one of the best works ever created by T.

S. Eliot. It is a dramatic monologue, full of tragic self-analysis and painful symbols. It is the monologue that reveals the hidden facets of Prufrock’s character and reinforces a feeling that dreams never come true.

The interchangeability of thoughts is followed by the interchangeability of landscapes, from “ restless nights in one-night cheap hotels / And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells” to the beach where “ I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each” (Eliot, 1917), and Prufrock seems confused over what others have to say with regard to his intimate feeling. He is hesitant on whether he has the right to reveal his true feelings (“ Do I dare /

Disturb the universe?" – Eliot, 1917). He is stuck in the middle of the road, and the fact that he is surrounded by people " talking of Michelangelo" only strengthens the unpleasant sense of isolation. Eliot's work is unique in a sense that it speaks of a specific person and is directed against the specific audience. Moreover, the work is full of symbols that enrich the poetic language and make the plot extremely complicated. Eliot does not seem to pay attention to those who surround him, but is rather devoted to the idea of in-depth exploration of his interiority.

The Love of J. Alfred Prufrock is heavily impacted by Eliot's philosophic works, and reflects a typical contemporary individual, who has the name, who has a dream, but who nevertheless is lost among the multiplicity of symbols, fears, and prejudices, which separate him from his romantic essence and drown him in reality. References Bush, R. (1999). T.

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