

A lecture on T.S.Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

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T.S.Eliot (1888-1965)

“The Love Song....”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xpRSmMnx1MU&t=170s>

A Brief Biography

A modern poet ,essayist , and dramatist •

Witnessed the great two world wars •

A critic of his time •

Influenced by the 17th century metaphysical •

style •

Metaphysical style is used to assist poets to express the complex reality of the 20th century as he stated in his essay “The Metaphysical Poets”

“Tradition and the individual talent” (1919)

- An essay written to express his deep interest in tradition
- Tradition for him is a means to overcome the sterility and decadence of modern age
- It is an “order” which requires “great labor”
- Tradition for him is the past and religion

“The love song of J. Alfred Prufrock”

- An image of modern man

- Eliot starts the poem by an epigraph

- An epigraph is a quotation taken from a text and written in its original language to state the

- main idea of the poem

- Eliot quotes Dante’s “The Divine Comedy”

- It shows that modern man is living in an earthly hell and there is no way out

setting

- The place is Boston
- The time post 1ww

Critical analysis

- Prufrock is roaming in the streets of the city
- Objective correlative is seen in the image of the “patient”
- The streets are half deserted
- Images as “one-night cheap hotels” and “oyster-shells” indicate moral emptiness
- Refrain is used as a device to emphasize certain notions “Michelangelo”
- It stresses the emptiness of the women in the tea party
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The Fog

The “yellow fog “ is a conceit •
to compare woman to fog
it indicates that Prufrock is a womanish
character

Another example of refrain is the repetition of •
“there will be time”

It reflects him as a man of words •

He takes time in thinking and talking with no •
action

“Do I dare ?” is another example of refrain to •
show his hesitation

Self consciousness

- He realizes that he is trivial
- He blames society for his weakness
- Society “formulated” him
- He is unable to free himself
- he compares himself to an insect

Allusions

- Different references are used to enrich the poem and to reveal the real character of Prufrock
- 1-artistic , as in the image of Michelangelo
- 2- religious allusion as in John the Baptist and Lazerus
- 3-literary allusion as in the example of Hamlet and the fool
- 4- mythological allusions :Atlas and the mermaid

love

The title is supposed to be of love but the end •
shows that the poem is about absence of love

Structure

- Circular structure is used to indicate the unity of the poem
- Apparently the poem is loose and fragmentary
- The separate details of the poem are connected by the unity of the theme

Style

- Eliot uses juxtaposition •
- Conceit •
- Other figures of speech •
- Irony •