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Received: 8/4/2023

Revised: 30/4/2023

Accepted: 23/5/2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31559/BAES2023.8.1.4>



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Alfred Prufrock Suffered from Self-Awareness Disorder Which Led Him to Social Anxiety

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Abstract:

This study sheds light on "*J. Alfred Prufrock's Love Song*" which is a poem that shows the disturbance of self-awareness of the narrator of the poems. The thoughts, senses, feelings, and emotions reflect a fifty-year-old man who experienced trauma due to the social situation and the crisis of the First World War. The aim of the study is to investigate the disturbance of self-awareness that the speaker suffers as a result of the societal situation in this era. The study concluded that "Prufrock" is a shy person with a hesitant nature and unable to take any positive or negative action in his life, and the disturbance in self-awareness led him to social anxiety which in turn led to despair, pessimism, isolation, and alienation. These aspects are among the principles of this modern period.

Keywords: *self-awareness; social anxiety; pessimism; isolation; alienation.*

1. Introduction

Modernism is a literary movement in the arts that lasted from roughly the years 1890 to 1950. It reflected a number of modifications in literary techniques in culture. The modernism movement like all movements rejected the previous movements. Modernism rejected the themes and techniques of romanticism, and its mission was to make it new. T.S. Eliot's "The Wasteland" poem is widely cited as an example of modern poetry; his poem "*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*" shares some of the characteristics of modernism. Consciousness study in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot expressed the fragile psychological state of humans in the twentieth century. Both Victorian ideals and the trauma of World War I abased the cultural concepts of people's identity causing artists to question the ideal romantic of a romantic poet who is capable of changing the world through verse. According to Ibrahim (2022) *Pessimism can be described as the result of a deep spiritual defect. The sensitive poets of the Victorian age were extremely prone to this pessimism. The age exposed a struggle between the industrial revolution and the forces of Christianity and faith.* Modernist writers wanted to possess their transformed world, which they saw as fractured, alienated and deformed. Prufrock" in the poem named "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock". T.S. Eliot in 1910 who is an American-born British poet published this poem "*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*" in 1915. It is considered to be the first printed poem by American-born British poet T. S. Eliot (1888–1965). Eliot began writing "Prufrock" in February 1910, and it was first published in the June 1915 issue of Poetry: A Magazine of Verse at the instigation of Ezra Pound (1885–1972). Prufrock was seen as foreshadowing a model change in culture from the late 19th-century Romantic era to Modernism. *The love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* is an exemplary poem of the Modern era, the poet used dramatic monologue in presenting this poem which is considered to be one of the modernist aspects. The persona in the poem is the narrator who tells the story of his life to a silent listener to reflect his inner feelings. Alfred Prufrock is a bashful, overly cautious middle-aged man who talks honestly about his failures: mainly his failure 'seize the day', and his lack of sexual fulfillment. He was so brilliant in making his silent listener wander through his depressing world. Eliot makes his own style by striking immediately to imagery; the narrator used stream-of-consciousness to present his feeling starting his poem with the image of a patient anesthetized on an operating table. The narrator does not tell the readers where Prufrock is; he does not guide us from the beginning of the narrative. Although, he started to describe "certain half-deserted streets" on which trade. One night, there are cheap hotels and sawdust restaurants in London. At this point that Eliot's protagonist becomes "an urban wanderer," one of the characteristics of modernism is that it is combated with questions of self and identity. However, unlike Romantic poetry, its chief interest was not the expression of emotion but was interested in larger

questions of self and meaning in a universal context. In "The Love Song of Alfred Prufrock," the narrator struggles with questions of meaning within not only society but also existence itself. He wonders: "Do I dare disturb the universe?"

2. Literature review

The term stream of consciousness, otherwise known as the inner monologue, characterizes the continuous flow of thoughts and consciousness in the waking mind. It is a way of telling or narrating a character's thought process either in a loose inner monologue or in relation to actions. Sang (2010) mentioned that stream of consciousness is a technique that captures, without the author's involvement, the entire mental process of a character in which perception is mixed with consciousness, semi-conscious thoughts, memories, feelings, and associations. In literature, stream of consciousness refers to the flow of these thoughts, referring to a particular person's thought process. A stream of consciousness is a literary style used to present a narrative in the form of a character's thoughts rather than using dialogue. The thought process in the character's mind is never practical, and it hops from one idea to another. In modern times, this method was used by T. S. Eliot in his poem Prufrock. After the First World War, men came out of this war disappointed by what they saw, did, and suffered. Stream-of-consciousness technology better captures these people's experiences. The first writers who used this technique of "stream-of-consciousness" are Édouard Desjardins, Dorothy Richardson in *Pilgrimage* (1915-1938), Virginia Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), to the *Lighthouse* (1927) William Faulkner in *Part One of The Sound and the Fury* (1929), for long segments found in George Meredith, Henry James and James Joyce in *Ulysses* (1922). In 1918, Sinclair first applied the term stream of consciousness in a literary context while discussing Dorothy Richardson's novel. Stream of consciousness was a phrase William used in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890). James describes the continuous flow of concepts, ideas and feelings in the waking mind.

According to Tara (2022), self-awareness is necessary to maintain our sense of self and to navigate complex social interactions. For instance, in a conversation at a social gathering, we need to be aware of our thoughts and feelings, so we can decide whether or not to share them. We also need to be aware of how others are perceiving us and reacting to what we are saying. However, certain habits of self-awareness can make us self-conscious.

According to Myoclonic web (2022), Self-consciousness has two forms: people who are internally self-conscious have an elevation of internal self-awareness, which has both pros and cons. Those people are more aware of their feelings and beliefs, so they stick to their personal values because they are aware of how their actions make them feel. People tend to focus on their negative inner situations like annoying thoughts and body feelings. These negative inner situations grow through heavy internal focus and lead to increased stress and anxiety.

The second type of individual is one who exhibits elevated external (or public) self-awareness and is externally self-conscious. They typically worry that others will evaluate them based on their appearance or behavior since they are more likely to focus on how others see them. They thus tend to follow group standards and steer clear of scenarios where they can come out as inferior or ashamed. In order to avoid appearing foolish and mistaken in front of others, they might not take risks or try new things. Social anxiety is a condition in which people worry about how other people will see them and can also be brought on by external self-awareness. Chronic social anxiety disorder can be brought on by ongoing acute public shyness. External self-awareness is the second kind. People with anxiety disorders have acute, excessive, and worry and fear about everyday situations. Anxiety disorders involve repeated episodes of sudden feelings of extreme anxiety and fear or terror that reach a peak within minutes (panic attacks). These feelings of anxiety and phobia interfere with daily activities, are difficult to control, are out of proportion to the actual danger and can last a long time. People may avoid places or situations to prevent these feelings. Generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder (social phobia), specific phobias, and separation anxiety disorder are examples of anxiety disorders. All these symptoms lead to pessimism which captures Prufrock's character in this poem.

3. Material and Methods

This study uses the descriptive and analytical method to achieve the purpose of the study to show how T.S. Eliot reflect the idea of self-consciousness as one of the aspects of modernism in his poem: "*The Love Song of Alfred Prufrock*"

4. Result and Discussion

This objective study highlights the situation that the speaker who suffered from self-consciousness disorder during this era. Consciousness is defined as the state of awareness of the self and environment with appropriate arousal or wakefulness (Giacino et al., 2018). Disorders of consciousness (DoC) are a wide spectrum of correlates of the brain's disruptions of arousal and awareness that may result from altered functional neural activities from cortico-cortical connectivity to sub cortico-cortical and global connectivity of all networks such as default mode network (DMN) and others (Giacino et al., 2014; Hodelin-Tablada, 2016). This may justify that the narrator of the poem also suffered from mental disease. The poem of the love song of Prufrock is started with quotation from Dante which is a style used by modern poets:

S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse

A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
 Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.
 Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo
 Non torno vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,
 Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.

1. *Let us go then, you and I,*
2. *When the evening is spread out against the sky*
3. *Like a patient etherized upon a table;*
4. *Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,*
5. *The muttering retreats*
6. *Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels*
7. *And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:*
8. *Streets that follow like a tedious argument*
9. *Of insidious intent*
10. *To lead you to an overwhelming question ...*
11. *Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"*
12. *Let us go and make our visit.*
13. *In the room the women come and go*
14. *Talking of Michelangelo.*
15. *The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,*
16. *The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,*
17. *Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,*
18. *Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,*
19. *Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,*
20. *Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,*
21. *And seeing that it was a soft October night,*
22. *Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.*
23. *And indeed there will be time*
24. *For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,*
25. *Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;*
26. *There will be time, there will be time*
27. *To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;*
28. *There will be time to murder and create,*
29. *And time for all the works and days of hands*
30. *That lift and drop a question on your plate;*
31. *Time for you and time for me,*
32. *And time yet for a hundred indecisions,*
33. *And for a hundred visions and revisions,*
34. *Before the taking of a toast and tea.*
35. *In the room the women come and go*
36. *Talking of Michelangelo.*
37. *And indeed there will be time*
38. *To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"*
39. *Time to turn back and descend the stair,*
40. *With a bald spot in the middle of my hair —*
41. *(They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!")*
42. *My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,*
43. *My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin —*
44. *(They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!")*
45. *Do I dare*
46. *Disturb the universe?*
47. *In a minute there is time*
48. *For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.*
49. *For I have known them all already, known them all:*
50. *Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,*
51. *I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;*
52. *I know the voices dying with a dying fall*
53. *Beneath the music from a farther room.*
 - a. *So how should I presume?*
 - b. *And how should I begin?*
54. *And I have known the eyes already, known them all—*
55. *The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,*

56. *And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,*
57. *When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,*
58. *Then how should I begin*
59. *To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?*
 - a. *And how should I presume?*
 - b. *And how should I begin?*
60. *And I have known the arms already, known them all—*
61. *Arms that are braceleted and white and bare*
62. *(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)*
63. *Is it perfume from a dress*
64. *That makes me so digress?*
65. *Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.*
 - a. *And should I then presume?*
 - b. *And how should I begin?*
66. *Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets*
67. *And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes*
68. *Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? ...*
69. *I should have been a pair of ragged claws*
70. *Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.*
71. *And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!*
72. *Smoothed by long fingers,*
73. *Asleep ... tired ... or it malingers,*
74. *Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.*
75. *Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,*
76. *Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?*
77. *But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,*
78. *Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter,*
79. *I am no prophet — and here's no great matter;*
80. *I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,*
81. *And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,*
82. *And in short, I was afraid.*
83. *And would it have been worth it, after all,*
84. *After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,*
85. *Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,*
86. *Would it have been worth while,*
87. *To have bitten off the matter with a smile,*
88. *To have squeezed the universe into a ball*
89. *To roll it towards some overwhelming question,*
90. *To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,*
91. *Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—*
92. *If one, settling a pillow by her head*
 - a. *Should say: "That is not what I meant at all;*
 - b. *That is not it, at all."*
93. *And would it have been worth it, after all,*
94. *Would it have been worth while,*
95. *After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,*
96. *After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor—*
97. *And this, and so much more?—*
98. *It is impossible to say just what I mean!*
99. *But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:*
100. *Would it have been worth while*
101. *If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,*
102. *And turning toward the window, should say:*
 - a. *"That is not it at all,*
 - b. *That is not what I meant, at all."*
103. *No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;*
104. *Am an attendant lord, one that will do*
105. *To swell a progress, start a scene or two,*
106. *Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,*
107. *Deferential, glad to be of use,*
108. *Politic, cautious, and meticulous;*
109. *Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;*

110. *At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—*
111. *Almost, at times, the Fool.*
112. *I grow old ... I grow old ...*
113. *I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.*
114. *Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?*
115. *I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.*
116. *I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.*
117. *I do not think that they will sing to me.*
118. *I have seen them riding seaward on the waves*
119. *Combing the white hair of the waves blown back*
120. *When the wind blows the water white and black.*
121. *We have lingered in the chambers of the sea*
122. *By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown*
123. *Till human voices wake us, and we drown.*

Before beginning the analysis of the poem, it is very clear that T.S. Eliot started his poem by making a direct quotation from Dante's *Inferno* in Italian. Eliot was known to have been a radical of Dante, and this quotation indicates that the poem belonged to modernism in which borrowing is one of the aspects of modern poetry. "*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*" is a poem written by a prominent poet T.S. Eliot was published in 1915. This poem focuses on the themes of alienation, fragmentation, isolation, and the diminishing power of traditional sources of authority which is considered to be one of the essential publications of the modern era in the 20th century. The poem is a dramatic monologue in which the speaker narrates what he believed were the anxieties and preoccupations of his inner life. According to Leichsenring and Leweke (2017), social disorder is characterized by an intense fear of social situation in which person anticipated being evaluated negatively. Prufrock's problem is not that he is confined, but that he thinks that he knows that he is confined, and it is that terrible awareness or consciousness which are the same. The confused thoughts and feelings that flow through his monologue controlled him. This problem is what philosophers called an epistemological one—an intellectual problem, in which there are conflicts in dealing with both what is known, and how it has come to be known. If readers cannot easily make sense of what Prufrock is saying, it is because he cannot make sense of it himself. In "*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*", Eliot makes his own style by striking readers with strong imagery that is used in his poem. The poet is starting his poem with that image of the patient anesthetized on an operating table although he does not tell us where Prufrock is. He does not even start to guide us through the narrative. Although the description of "certain half-deserted streets" on which trade "one-night cheap hotels" and sawdust restaurants" – in London. it is clear that at this point that Eliot's protagonist becomes "an urban wanderer."

The narrator through dramatic monologue tries describing the shabby corners of the streets in the city, the cheap hotels and restaurants, nightclubs, tea-house and some clubs that he used to go to. The description of these shabby places in the city reflects his pessimistic view which is a result of external self-awareness. He frequently met some women there and chatted with them. He hesitated, not daring to sit with women sitting at a separate table with his back turned. This showed that he is suffering from external awareness disorder. As T.S. Eliot described Prufrock as a modern-day urban speaker, who talks clearly about his failures: chiefly, his failure to 'grasp the nettle' or 'seize the day', his lack of sexual fulfillment and his overall sense of setback man who did not participate in any issue because he felt shy and had a fear of being scummy while speaking something and was bashful about what he wore; this made him tacky in the eyes of people. The researcher believes the narrator in addition to his social anxiety suffers from sexual disorders. This is proved in these lines and line 62 especially proved that the narrator has good self-awareness.

*And I have known the arms already, known them all—
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare
[But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!]
Is it perfume from a dress
. That makes me so digress.
Arms that lie along a table, or wrap around a shawl.
And should I then presume?
And how should I begin?
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
. I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
I know the voices dying with a dying fall*

When we talk about coffee spoons, it is like the boring flow of his boring life. The rhythm of the daily activity of making a cup of coffee repeats as he gets older. Prufrock thinks he doesn't have much time to do his activities in life, so he just keeps doing what he was doing. The spoons symbolize a repetitive activity similar to stirring coffee. "Coffee Spoons" has the meaning of repeating Prufrock's activities every day and then struggling with his regret that he had not consciously used the elapsed time. Repetition means monotony that leads to depression and frustration, and they are manifestations of the modern movement. Also, measuring all his life with two coffee

spoons, and that coffee symbolizes the blackness that indicates darkness and gloom that lead us to pessimism; this is the case for all those who lived through this era after the First World War. Self-consciousness disorder is very clear in Prufrock character that imagines himself only as he sees how others think of him. ***Is he getting thin? Is his hair getting thin? Does his tie look all right?*** This self-consciousness would be possible, as the reader/ listener is exposed to imagine except that Prufrock wishes not to connect with this society that limits his behavior. This is embodied for him in the behavior of women who seem to judge him but ignore him. If he were saying that he was Lazarus who had risen from the dead and had the ability to tell them the most amazing truths. He could not see any woman agree to speak Eliot tries to devalue Prufrock's anxiety a simple piece of fruit confounds him. He has to overcome his feelings of sexual inadequacy, and his worry that his balding head and thin physique gain him the disdain of women. In its last portrait of singing mermaids who take the speaker to his destruction, finally, the repetition of the phrase the overwhelming question alludes to James Fennimore Cooper's novel *The Pioneers* (1823) which is one of Eliot's favorite books as a child and the place in which that phrase first appears.

The effect of these very frequent allusions is often to give the impression of negative comparison. The speaker feels that he is inadequate and diminished in comparison with the "greatness" of figures like John the Baptist or Hamlet. His own head, if served on a platter like John the Baptist, would be "slightly bald"; he asserts that if he appeared in Hamlet, he would be a petty "attendant lord" or even a "Fool." These self-deprecations show how the speaker in the poem feels self-disrespected by comparing himself to these things. The speaker feels alienated from these literary greats even as he alludes to them, suggesting that the speaker's sense of isolation from the world.

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is considered one of the fundamental modernist poems, which is able to reflect the social and intellectual status of the early 20th century. The poem emphasizes that modernity comes with a constant sense of alienation and isolation from others. The speaker of the poem is an example of a man who indicates the modern status that results in feeling alienated, depressed and pessimistic about the world.

5. Conclusion

T.S Eliot presents Prufrock's dilemma as a typical modern man devoid of the ideals of the Romantic and Victorian periods. He lived in a world that lacked all ideals. Alfred Prufrock is a good speaker who tells us through a monologue about his awareness of his shortcomings. He describes to us the condition that he lives as if he lives in an urban where humans show no sympathy. Prufrock hesitates to express himself. *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* makes the readers think of the persona as the prototype of humans. This reflects his psyche and psychological disturbance. It is proven from his confession that although he suffered from self-awareness disorder although he has an open mind intellect, he was touchy, oversensitive, sexually disturbed, hesitated, alienated, isolated, and self-aware and this led him to have social anxiety, and this resulted in being pessimistic, isolated and alienated from the society.

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