

Dramatic Monologue in T. S. Eliot's The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

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ABSTRACT:

This paper discusses the use of 'dramatic monologue' and 'stream of consciousness' in T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock". It highlights the history of the two terms with references to certain lines of the poem. It unveils the effect of using such a technique by Eliot. The paper investigates how the speaker 'J. Alfred Prufrock' is trying to communicate with the reader in dramatic monologue. Furthermore, it examines how J. Alfred Prufrock's brain and process of thoughts is working through the use of stream of consciousness and interior monologue to achieve such process of thoughts. The paper pays all the attention to main character's language to answer the research's question in which makes the paper a discourse analytic research. The main question that the paper raises is how Prufrock's behavior explains the existence of dramatic monologue within himself. It is worth mentioning that the paper's conclusion provides the findings of the research.

Keywords: Dramatic monologue, Stream of consciousness.

Introduction

T. S. Eliot had been a well-known literary man in the second quarter of the twentieth century. He experienced the years after the First World War in which man's life was damaged and lost. He saw that man's promises were broken and hopes were dashed. He recognized poetry as a force that could expose the confusion and emptiness of the modern world. In most of his poem, he describes the root of unhappiness and confusion of the modern world where people are not able to live a complete, happy and healthy life since life-troubles make the individual's life hard and harsh. (Thornley and Roberts, 1995, p.187-188). Therefore, the modern man was always a subject for the surrounding changes, which could mostly seem passive for the individual and her/his personality. T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", is regarded one of the best examples of dramatic monologue. Eliot uses to show the 'streams of consciousness' of the character 'J. Alfred Prufrock', just like the character when he jumps from one subject to another and at the end, he comes to the main issue that concerns us all and he is the only person who speaks in the poem. The reader understands J. Alfred Prufrock's thoughts through his monologue. Eliot uses dramatic monologue to let the listeners only listen to J. Alfred Prufrock and what he wants to say or show without any interference. There is sometimes an imaginary person with whom the speaker is interacting with. This person could be the reader or the one that the speaker has created in his mind to reveal some of his thoughts and issues with.

The development of the dramatic monologue started at the beginning of the twentieth century when interest peaks in the fascinations of personality and in psychology as a discipline is also suggestive. However, for Eliot, the dramatic monologue is an invitation to the reader to experience the disassembling of personality and is no longer a vehicle for the exposure of an interesting personality. The monologue invites the reader not only to observe, but participate actively in the poet's creation, by reacting subjectively to the world of the persona (Cooper, 2009, p.49). The use of stream of consciousness makes the poem somehow difficult at first. With the use of stream of consciousness and reaching his mind by dramatic monologue, especially the interior monologue of the character, Eliot attempts to imitate

the natural flow of J. Alfred Prufrock's thoughts, reflections, and memories. The character's thoughts are arranged in an associated system in which one thought can suddenly bring another unrelated one. So, by the use of stream of consciousness, the writer presents an intimate picture of the character's personality (Adventures in American literature, 1996, p.781).

Dramatic monologue

A monologue is a long speech by a single person. In drama, it is called soliloquy when an actor utters a monologue to express her /his thoughts. In poetry, it is a type of Lyric poem which was developed by Robert Browning as "My Last Duchess". The dramatic monologue has the following features: (1) A single person, who is obviously not the poet, utters the speech that makes up the whole of the poem in a specific situation at a critical moment. For example, in "My Last Duchess", the Duke is negotiating with an emissary for a second wife. (2) This person addresses one or more other people; in the presence of auditors, and what they say and do only from the discourse of the single speaker. (3) the poet's formulation of what the lyric speaker says is the revelation of the speaker's character and temperament to the reader (Abrams, 1999, p.70). Moreover, it is defined as "a poem written as if spoken aloud by one character, who reveals his personality as well as comments on a situation" (Stephen, 1984, p.77). So, the reader is invited to identify the speaker's evolution of thoughts, memories, and observations towards an emotional problem. and the best-known modern example is T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915). Further, it is a kind of poem where a silent audience of one or more persons is spoken to by a single fictional or historical character rather than the poet himself. Such poems show the mind of the impersonated character, whose personality is revealed unwittingly other than the poet's own thoughts (Baldick, 2006, p.72).

As noted by D. Galens (2002, p.371) a dramatic monologue is a written or oral composition by a single individual. Though it is sometimes a lengthy one in lines, it has no set-in length. Peck and Coyle (2002) state that dramatic monologue is a poem in which the audience is addressed by an imaginary speaker. So, the reader understands that the speaker tries to convey his

message to the readers and he doesn't expect action from them. The poem's speaker speaks to the unseen person who in return doesn't answer back, certain and thus, aspects of his character are revealed. As Eliot puts in:

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table. (Eliot, 1991: pp 1-3)

The first line may suggest a dialogue between two persons, but it is not like that. The first three lines of the poem show that the speaker 'J. Alfred Prufrock' invites the unseen person to start his journey with. The reader may think that he will do something great, but the simile of 'a patient etherised' foreshadows his inability to take any action.

To lead you to an overwhelming question,
Oh, do not ask, 'What is it?' (Eliot, 10-11)

The speaker is making a great deal of his question and telling the readers not to ask about the nature of the question because the reader will notice the results when he is going to ask. Even in this situation he doesn't want his readers to interfere to make a clear example of dramatic monologue. This "overwhelming question" refers to his intended proposal to the lady he loves. He avoids discussing this question. J. Alfred Prufrock does not wish to tell anyone the purpose of his visit. He is telling his reader that he should make a visit with him. However, the readers may ask does he make the visit, or he only imagines the experience? Later, it is understood that he is speaking to himself and he is not going to ask any questions. He is only convincing himself to have enough courage to do so, but he is only deceiving himself. This point may reflect the personality of T. S. Eliot in of being a shy person.

And indeed there will be time
To wonder, 'Do I dare?' and, 'Do I dare'
Time to turn back and descend the stair,
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair-
(They will say: 'How his hair is growing thin!') (Eliot, 37-41)

This character is talking and convincing himself to take action that, but only in his mind. Then, he wonders if he has the bravery to do so. He exaggerates everything that makes him unable to handle any issue. He thinks that everybody is looking at him and that they will notice his physical fault which is reflected in the inability of J. Alfred Prufrock who wastes time. He doesn't realize that the time is passing without taking any action till he becomes old. Therefore, these lines expose his state of mind and how his thinking procedure is working.

Stream of Consciousness

Stream of Consciousness is a technique that records the random flow of thoughts and impressions through the character's mind. The writer tries to offer a full impression of the mental life of the character. One way for this technique to be achieved is by allowing the character in the first person, either through letters or directly. By the end of the nineteenth century, an increasing awareness of the complexity of the human mind was developed. If one admits the uniqueness of a mind, it is then impossible for anyone to provide an authoritative experience (Peck and Coyle, 2002, p. 29).

A. C. Bolgan (1973, p. 95) states that the stream of consciousness for T. S. Eliot is only the material of his art and the direct interior monologue is one of the techniques developed by him for handling the poem. For Chris Baldick (2006, p. 244) the stream of consciousness is a continuous flow of thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and memories in the human mind, or a literary technique of representing the mental process

in the fictional characters, often in a fragmented, unpunctuated or disjointed form of interior monologue. The term is often used as a synonym for interior monologue, which is the technique for presenting it.

In novel, stream of consciousness is a technique in which the writer tries to recreate the actual sense and flow of the character's thoughts as they pass in his head, or it could describe an experience that the character is feeling at that moment. It is worth mentioning that the thought, impressions, and feelings that the character had shown or felt are not grammatically or logically adhered to. The character's speech is somehow a pattern of association rather than a formal speech. The two best well-known practitioners of this technique are James Joyce and Virginia Woolf (Stephen, 1984, p. 115). This technique is dominant in poetry when the poet tries to create a sole character in which he uses dramatic monologue to interact with his mind. At this point, the random ideas that come to the character's mind are associated with the speech or the dialogue that the character uses to convey or show his message.

The speaker suggests a physical journey to his audience, which is also a mental journey. When the speaker 'J. Alfred Prufrock' states the dirty urban streets aren't only meant and ugly spaces of the city, but the spaces of the speaker's mind and wandering paths of his undirected thoughts. So, he is scared of confronting the meaninglessness of his life when he is about to start his journey. Thus, he is caught between the rock of his desire to change his life and the fear of any changes. He doesn't want himself to be allowed to recognize how unhappy he is and to bury himself in the triviality and anonymity of polite society (Lawrence, Seifter and Ratner, 1985, p.320).

The repetition of the line 'And indeed there will be time' shows a clear example of the mentality that J. Alfred Prufrock has. He is in a continuous state of conflict within his mind. On the one hand, his mind is convincing him that there will be time to make the changes that he is waiting for, on the other, his way of thinking in the idea of changing makes him horrified of the outcomes. So, the reader understands the concept of time according to J. Alfred Prufrock which means nothing but that there will be time for indecisions.

To say: 'I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all' (Eliot, 104-05)

While J. Alfred Prufrock walks to meet a woman for drinking tea, he compares himself to various famous characters such as Lazarus and Hamlet. He wants to demonstrate that he is as great as Lazarus and Hamlet in which he is going to make great decisions, but finally, he realizes that he is not great as these men. He is contemplating his future and he is about to ask these women a great question that his readers are waiting for, which is realized as another conflict in his mind. This is the best example of the stream of consciousness in which our character reveals to show his internal and chaotic thoughts which make him an indecisive person.

The line 'To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet' (27) is the first indication that shows the split of his being into an 'inner' and 'outer' self. According to J. Alfred Prufrock, the people are only characterized as 'faces' and their reality and integrity are implicitly denied. He is afraid that his integrity will be destroyed if it is defined or understood. Further, when he says 'I am no prophet' he means that he is in a conflict with his mind and that his stream of consciousness has split his identity for a good spiritual side with which he identifies himself, and a bad sexual side, which is the part of himself that cannot be controlled, and therefore, he feels alienated.

For I have known them all already, known them all
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons, (Eliot, 49-51)

In the lines above, Eliot is trying to convince his readers that he knows and experienced everything in life. He knows the times of the day beyond a doubt. However, the only thing that reader understands is that he has drunk too many cups of coffee. The process of his thoughts is moving so fast to impress the readers, but unfortunately, he is deceiving himself. He is getting his readers away from the main question that he is about to ask. As he is confused in his state of mind, he is trying to drive them away from the main reason which is his important question.

Conclusion

The dramatic monologue of J. Alfred Prufrock is a method of communicating with his mind. The dramatic monologue in this case would be interior monologue of the character. The character's stream of consciousness is reached by his interior monologue J. Alfred Prufrock's state of mind refers to the modern society which alienates the individual. Also, one of the major difficulties that he presents to the silent audience is his fragmented and disjointed personality. The character talks to himself which is defined as dramatic monologue to analyze himself and the situation that he is in. Such dramatic monologue leads to stream of consciousness which is an interior monologue.

When the character describes different things which are not beautiful, he is describing his state of mind at that moment. He is raising a question which can be interpreted as a rhetorical one. A question in which no answer or reaction is needed from the audience. J. Alfred Prufrock's mind is in a state of split his identity as he is in a constant conflict. So, he is sure that there will be time for indecisions and he doesn't realize that time is

not waiting for anybody. Finally, he admits his failure to reach his destination. Therefore, Eliot's character is dreaming of things to come true just like the modern man who is even daydreaming to escape from the ugly and disturbing reality that it is imposed on the individual. So, the discourse within Prufrock's personality describes the reflection of his indecisive character. Thus, the paper's question is answered through the discourse uttered by Prufrock.

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المونولوج الدرامي في قصيدة تي إس إليوت "أغنية الحب ل جيه ألفريد بروفروك"

الملخص:

يناقش هذا البحث استخدام "المونولوج الدرامي" و "تيار الوعي" في قصيدة تي إس إليوت "أغنية الحب ل جيه ألفريد بروفروك"، بالإضافة إلى تاريخ المصطلحين مع الإشارات إلى الأسطر في القصيدة. في المونولوج الدرامي، يتناول البحث محاولة جيه ألفريد بروفروك التواصل مع القارئ. كما ويتناول البحث تأثير استخدام هذه التقنية من قبل الشاعر إليوت في قصيدته. كما ويركز البحث على طريقة تفكير جيه ألفريد بروفروك من خلال استخدام تيار الوعي في القصيدة واستخدام المونولوج الداخلي لتحقيق تلك الأفكار. تولي الورقة كل الاهتمام بلغة الشخصية الرئيسية للإجابة على سؤال البحث الذي يجعل البحث خطاباً تحليلياً. السؤال الرئيسي الذي تطرحه الورقة هو كيف يفسر سلوك بروفروك وجود مونولوج درامي داخل نفسه. ومن الجدير بالذكر أن خاتمة الورقة تقدم نتائج البحث. وهكذا يصف الخطاب داخل شخصية بروفروك انعكاس شخصيته غير الحاسمة. وبالتالي، تتم الإجابة على سؤال الورقة من خلال الخطاب الذي نطق به بروفروك. لذلك يُطرح سؤال الورقة من خلال الخطاب الذي نطق به بروفروك.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المونولوج الدرامي، تيار الوعي.

مونولوجيا دراماتيكية ل هلبهستا تي إس إليوت "هوزانا هفنيني يا جيه ألفريد بروفروك"

پوخته:

هذه القصيدة كفتوكيكي لسهر پيناسهكرن و كارئينانا مونولوجيا دراماتيكية و پيلا هوشمهنديي دكت ل هلبهستا تي إس إليوت "هوزانا هفنيني يا جيه ألفريد بروفروك" و دياركرنا ديروكا ههدوو تيگه هان دگه ل تامازهدان بو ريزين هلبهستي. دمونولوجيكا دراماتيكية دا، دقتت هه فيزيين كا ناخفتقان 'پروفروك' ههول ددهت چ ب خوئندهفانان رادگههينه دگه ل زانينا بانديورا بكارئينانا تهنكا هوسا ل هلبهستا تي إس إليوت دا. د هه مان دهمدا پيدفييه هه م برانن كا چهوا دهماغئ پروفروكي كاردكت و پروسيسا كارئينانا هزوين وي ب ريكا كارئينانا پيلا هوشمهنديي گ هلبهستي دا چهوانيا بكارئينانا مونولوجيا دراماتيكية بؤ بهئينانا في پروسيسي. و لدوماهيكي فهكولين لگور شتوازا فهكوتن و ريكخستنا هارفردي ريكخستن. فهكولين هه مي تهكزيي ددهت زمانئ كارهكتهري دا كو بهرسفا پرسيارا سههركي يا فهكولينئ بده و چهوانبيا رهفتاري دبه مونولوجيا دراماتيكية. هه ئي گوتني به كو نه نجاما فهكولينئ بهرسفا فهديتنن فهكولينئ دده. ژ بهرفئ يهكي ناخفتنا د ناف كهسايهتيا پروفروكي دا روونكرنا كارهكتهرا وي يا بي بريار ديار دكت. دته نجامدا پرسا فهكولينئ دهپته بهرسف دان ب رييا ناخفتنا پروفروكي دا.

په يقين سههركي: مونولوجيا دراماتيكية، پيلا هوشمهنديي.