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문학석사 학위논문

Poetic Utterance and Subjectivity in T. S. Eliot's
Prufrock and Other Observations

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고 성 희

Abstract

Poetic Utterance and Subjectivity in T. S. Eliot's *Prufrock and Other Observations*

Sung Hee Ko

Department of English Language and Literature
The Graduate School
Seoul National University

This thesis aims to examine the relationship between poetic utterance and subjectivity in T. S. Eliot's *Prufrock and Other Observations* in terms of gender, nonhuman agency, and satire. Many studies on Eliot's early poetry focus on the speaker, in particular, Prufrock of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." Prufrock's timid and hesitant nature and sensitivity can be identified as "the Prufrockian temperament" which can be traced in other speakers. In this thesis, the "Prufrockian temperament" directly affects the speakers' poetic utterance, especially when the speakers experience difficulty speaking out loud or collecting their fragmented consciousness. In the presence of a female character, actual or imagined, they encounter internal turmoil, resulting in their digression and eventual silence. In other poems in *Prufrock*, the nonhuman agent overtakes the position of acting and speaking subjects while the speaker's passive consciousness merely registers their actions. In both cases, the speakers exhibit the "Prufrockian temperament," often

ending the poems in the same fragmented states in which they began. On the other hand, the speakers of the satires in *Prufrock* juxtapose with speakers with the “Prufrockian temperament.” Placing an emotional distance from the other characters through satire, the satirical speakers succeed in their utterance. However, within their relatively coherent characterization, they erase traces of their subjectivity by maintaining an objective position. Both Prufrockian speakers and satirical speakers hide behind fragmented and coherent utterance as they hand over the subject position to the women, nonhuman agents, and satirical objects.

In the first chapter of the thesis, the male speaker’s failure of poetic utterance and his fragmented consciousness in the presence of both imagined and actual female characters will be explored. The second chapter delves into poems where the isolated speaker observes the urban landscape where nonhuman agents direct and control the speaker’s consciousness, often taking the position of speaking subject. Although the speakers of the city poems do not experience the chaos of those with the “Prufrockian temperament,” they reflect similar aspects of sensitivity and passivity and they too lose control over their utterance and subjectivity. Lastly, the satirical speakers’ utterance will be analyzed as the emotional distance between speaker and character frees the speaker from any anxiety or fragmentation. Nevertheless, his utterance does not construct his subject position, since it seeks to create

satirical objects rather than to reveal his viewpoint. Altogether, the poems in *Prufrock and Other Observations* reflect Eliot's overall question about the establishment of subjectivity whether there is a failure or success of utterance.

Keywords: T. S. Eliot, Prufrock, speaker, subjectivity, utterance, gender, nonhuman agency, satire

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Introduction: Eliot's Speaker

T. S. Eliot's first volume of poetry, *Prufrock and Other Observations*,¹ is not just an achievement for the American-born poet who had left the United States to pursue poetry. It reveals a vision of a Modernist poet who aimed to break away from his predecessors, especially the Romantics, whose poetry he found to be too "personal" ("Tradition and the Individual Talent" 21). While there are glimpses of Eliot's personal experiences in the poetry, such as the Boston references in the "sawdust restaurants with oyster shells" ("The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" 7) or his visit to Northern Italy to find the actual "La Figlia che Piange" stele (Smith 27), Eliot strove to be impersonal. His essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (hereafter "Tradition"), first published in *The Egoist* in 1919, validates his perception of an impersonal poet:

[F]or my meaning is, that the poet has, not a "personality" to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways. Impressions and experiences which

¹ All Eliot's poetic works are quoted from *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* first published in 1969. This thesis will analyze all the poems in *Prufrock and Observations*, including "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "Portrait of a Lady," "Preludes," "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," "Morning at the Window," "The Boston Evening Transcript," "Aunt Helen," "Cousin Nancy," "Hysteria," "Conversion Galante," and "La Figlia che Piange," with the exception of "Mr. Apollinax."

are important for the man may take no place in the poetry, and those which become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality. (19-20)

For Eliot, a poet should let his "impressions and experiences combine" on their own, and avoid expressing his "personality." Unlike the way the Romantics, such as William Wordsworth, place great importance on personal experiences in their poetry and oftentimes make them the subject of their poems, Eliot tries to "escape" from his emotion and personality (21).

Eliot's emphasis on impersonality originates from his anti-Romanticism, a viewpoint that shapes his ideas about poetry early on. According to George Bornstein, "The romantics came to signify so much for Eliot not only because they affected him so violently as reader but because they determined his early poetic efforts as writer" (97). While his early poetry, mainly the unpublished poems from his teenager years, reflects traces of romantic influence, Eliot gradually rejects the romantic tradition, identifying it "with a permanent adolescence of the spirit and its products as an immature phase of poetic development" (Bornstein 100). Associating romanticism with adolescence, Eliot sought to align himself with classicism as he gravitated towards "seventeenth-century English drama, nineteenth-century French poetry, and Dante" (101). As Grover Smith reasons,

“That the romantic residuum in Eliot’s poetry should have been pessimistic was owing to several causes, in part personal and in part educational” (4). During his undergraduate years at Harvard, he met Irving Babbitt, who “conveyed the New Humanism’s classical tenets of reason, order, law, and discipline that Eliot used to slough off his adolescent romanticism” (Bornstein 101). Romanticism for both Babbitt and Eliot serves as a “foil to justify [their] own tenets” (102) and it is clear that their criticisms of romanticism is limited to their agendas.²

Eliot considers romanticism as “imagination as a violence from within,” which he sought to eliminate with “external authority” (Bornstein 112). Literary tradition is one main example of the external authority that Eliot relies on, especially in his poetry. As an artist pursuing “perfect[ion],” he seeks a way to separate “the man who suffers and the mind which creates” (“Tradition” 18). In other words, the artist must differentiate “personality” and the “medium,” and struggle to leave “the mind [to] digest and transmute the passions which are its material” (18). Eliot delineates the mind of the poet as “a *receptacle* for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to

²Bornstein mentions how Babbitt “mischievously conflated Rousseau and the great romantics” in his book *Rousseau and Romanticism*, because he did not differentiate “genuine from sham romanticism” (102). Babbitt’s criticism of Romanticism only substantiates his own doctrines and philosophy, and Eliot attempts to uphold his in “Tradition and the Individual Talent.” Eliot’s criticisms serve to validate his theories, which “[t]he essay’s partisans have too quickly accepted its anti-romantic claims at face value, for it not only describes romanticism wrongly but reaches romantic conclusions” (Bornstein 111).

form a new compound are present together” (19; emphasis added). After the mind receives and stores the different fragments, it unites them to create a “new compound” that has no trace of the poet’s personality. Although *Prufrock and Other Observations* was published in 1917, the poems justify Eliot’s vision of the impersonal poet which he advocates two years later with “Tradition.”

Interestingly, Eliot’s cautious efforts to erase the poet in the poetry mirror the speakers in Eliot’s first volume who attempt to mask and hide their emotions and flaws. Identical to the mind of the poet which becomes a “receptacle” of the different fragments, the mind of each speaker also receives the pieces of his “numberless feelings, phrases, [and] images” (19). The inarticulate and fragmented result is a reflection of the mind:

Although Eliot uses conventional language, the poem’s surface is characterized by disjunction and discontinuity; individual sequences make sense within themselves but not in succession; the overall pattern traced in the poem seems “disconnected and incoherent in appearance,” as Woolf calls for an act of the mind to be. (Mayer 8)

Like the poet’s mind, the speaker’s mind is “disconnected” and “incoherent in appearance.” It is especially the case in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (hereafter “Prufrock”) where J. Alfred Prufrock,

the silent and hesitant speaker, unveils the disjunctive pieces of his mundane activities and thoughts.

As the speaker in Eliot's first widely recognized poem, *Prufrock* points the direction of Eliot's early poems, as can be vividly seen in *Prufrock and Other Observations*, the volume published two years after the first appearance of "Prufrock" in 1917. Unlike the typical Wordsworthian speaker who connects his observations and experiences together to produce a unified consciousness and establish his subjectivity, *Prufrock* does not achieve unity within his observations nor his consciousness; he does not use "speech-shaped language, which is *designed* to be communicated, to portray the kind of experience that is unshaped and spontaneous" (Mayer 9; emphasis original). Instead, he is unable to take control of his scattered consciousness and lacks the ability to "design" his consciousness. In fact, *Prufrock* can only imagine himself as the observed rather than the observer with more control over sight and communication; in other words, he hands over the subject position to the observers, who are only figments of his imagination. According to Rachel Potter, "Prufrock...is controlled by and estranged from the exact, scientific judgments of others and struggles to free himself from an etherized or drugged existence" (221). The "eyes that fix [him] in a formulated phrase" (56) overwhelm *Prufrock* who spends his time cancelling his thoughts, afraid of revealing his self. He does not rely on "a language

of public sense to portray ostensibly private experience” but uses “the mind-shaped language” (Mayer 10) to display his unstructured consciousness.

This thesis focuses on how Eliot questions the establishment of a stable and specific self, through the fragmented consciousness of the speakers, including Prufrock, in *Prufrock and Other Observations* (hereafter *Prufrock*). It is a subject which interested Eliot in his philosophical studies at Harvard, where he started his doctoral dissertation on F. H. Bradley (Smith 4). While Eliot finished his dissertation on Bradley in 1916, his deep philosophical interest of the romantic “self” left an indelible trace in his poetry. Bradley did not align himself with the romantics: “Far from extolling the self like the romantics, Bradley, while affirming its importance, diminished its dignity” (Smith 4). Eliot’s interest in Bradley’s philosophy led him to write in *The Monist* about Bradley’s epistemology on the concept of self: “A self [...] is an ideal and largely practical construction, one’s own self as much as others” (Kenner 62). Eliot agrees with “Bradley’s view of the personality as a mere cluster of imperfections and delusions,” speaking for Eliot’s speakers who have difficulty establishing their personality, or their subjectivity,³ since “in the

³ Smith uses the word, “personality,” to describe Bradley’s view on the “personal identity.” However, in *Appearance and Reality*, Bradley emphasizes the words “subject” and “object” to describe the concept of self. Therefore, in terms of addressing the “self,” “subjectivity” rather than “personality,” a term Eliot directs at the poet, would be a more fitting term for the speaker, especially in this thesis.

conscious soul itself, that center has no unity and is but a vehicle for appearances" (Smith 4). The "clusters of imperfections and delusions" represent the different fragments of the speaker, which in his consciousness becomes only "a vehicle for appearances." Hugh Kenner states that Eliot's study of Bradley "affirm[ed] the artificiality of all personality including the one we intimately suppose to be our true ones; not only the faces we prepare but the 'we' that prepares" (55). Kenner's statement confirms that Bradley's philosophical influence on Eliot lingers in Eliot's early poetry.

As David Ward observes, "If one were to wish to state a theme which unites the whole of Eliot's major work, it is this theme of a divided sensibility seeking for unity; and each of the poems . . . can be seen as moments in the search" (12). Potter also discovers that "[i]n each of Eliot's poems and essays, he asks how pattern, form, and order can be generated out of the 'chaotic, irregular, fragmentary' experience of the ordinary man, a 'mass' of perceptions, and 'the chaos of contemporary history'" (223). The divided, or fragmented, speakers store the fragments, whether of the body, the environment, other literary works, or memory, but cannot generate "form" nor "order." Instead, they only end up in a numb and inert state.

According to Hugh Kenner, Prufrock's fragmented consciousness do not establish a concrete subjectivity: "What 'Prufrock' is, is the name of a possible zone of consciousness where

these materials can maintain a vague congruity; no more than that; certainly not a person" (40). The different "materials" Prufrock mixes together unveil his careful temperament, which echo in other poems as well. The reader observes the speakers' "Prufrockian temperament" (Smith 29), a sensitivity which causes them to scrutinize and reconsider every action and word to the point where they cannot say or do anything. Instead, the women and nonhuman objects replace the speakers' loss of utterance and action. Whether a speaker has a "Prufrockian temperament" or not affects his utterance and stability of subject position.

The speakers with the Prufrockian temperament avoid exposing their fragmented consciousness through their silence. In the second poem of the volume, "Portrait of a Lady" (hereafter "Portrait"), the speaker's words to the woman are absent, while the woman's remarks in quotations are very detailed and clear. Likewise, in the "women poems" where the speaker interacts with a woman, imagined or actual, the speaker remains quiet while the woman's utterance only accentuates his silence. According to William Harmon, "silence suggests a loss of articulate speech and an inability to do anything, in words or actions, effectively" (450). Without the words to express what they feel, the speakers fill the poem, a kind of "medium," with their impressions. With the exception of Prufrock who declares how he "was afraid" ("Prufrock" 86), the speakers do not actually explain their

emotions, especially their anxiety when they think about or actually confront a woman.

Their silence becomes a mask to hide the disorder and disunity within. In "Hysteria," the speaker experiences chaos and disorder when he becomes "involved in" a woman's laughter; however, he remains passive and quiet throughout the scene, as another character, "an elderly waiter," (32) speaks as his replacement. The lady in "Portrait" continues speaking while the speaker loses control when "a dull tom-tom begins / Absurdly hammering a prelude of its own" (32-33). Unlike the Wordsworthian speaker, who asserts his "emotion recollected in tranquility" (21), Eliot's speakers encounter internal chaos and disorder, demonstrating the difficulty in establishing their subject position. The smiles and gestures that substitute words demonstrate the speakers' inability to express themselves in a straightforward way, especially in front of the women. In the case where the speaker merely imagines confronting a woman, the speaker tries to appease his troubled consciousness by thinking of ways to cancel actions of the past. This is why in "La Figlia che Piange" the speaker carefully imagines changing what has already occurred, only to return to the same state in which he is stuck. All the speakers with Prufrockian temperaments end up in the same condition as they started in the beginning; the pattern of "cancelling" their words or actions reflects their failure to locate their subject position, as each

speaker erases traces of his self in his silence and passivity.

Contrasting to the anxious speaker in the women poems, the speaker in most city poems in *Prufrock* mainly observes his desolate surroundings. While the women poems also take place in the city, the city poems capture the speaker, alienated in the streets, without the “company” of a specific character. He does not address a specific person and the distance between himself and other people is highlighted, especially when he focuses on specific parts of their bodies to demonstrate their mechanical aspects. In this aspect, he resembles the Prufrockian speaker who only concentrates on fragments instead of the whole. Like the Prufrockian speaker who is unable to speak before women, the speaker in the “city poems” also remains passive and silent as he makes note of his surroundings. Unable to identify the human aspects of the people, the speaker describes the atmosphere, such as “brown waves of fog” in “Morning at the Window” (hereafter “Morning”) and the “morning” in “Preludes” which demonstrate more human qualities than the passive “soul stretched tight across the skies” (39). In the same manner as the speakers in the presence of the “women,” the speaker clings to his unstable and fragmented consciousness, even in isolation and is unable to speak, which “can be a horrifying thing, this impoverishment of speech to an ambiguous vacuity” (Harmon 453). Similar to how he is stuck within the cyclic pattern of “doing and

undoing," the speaker is unable to establish his subject position as he submissively observes the cyclic patterns of the mechanical world.

"As Eliot's human speakers lose verbal potency," writes Harmon, "speech is shifted to another kind of agent" (452). In this mechanical world, nonhuman agents substitute the silent speaker. As demonstrated by the "street-lamp" in "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" (hereafter "Rhapsody"), "nonverbal utterances or verbal utterances by nonhuman agents usually betoken loss" (Harmon 453).⁴ The speaker loses control over his sight, memory, and even his utterance; however, his awareness of the hopeless cycle which "the worlds revolve" ("Rhapsody" 53) differentiates him from the people who have lost their human aspects. Despite the desolate patterns of the world he observes, the speaker attempts to hold onto his fragmented consciousness. The same incapability to find the subject position links the speakers in "Rhapsody," "Preludes," and "Morning" together with the speakers with the Prufrockian temperament. Moreover, the similarities between Prufrock's observation of "the evening . . . spread out against the sky / Like a patient etherised upon a table" ("Prufrock" 2-3) and the observations of different environments the speakers in "Preludes" and "Rhapsody" describe link the speakers of

⁴ Harmon points out the aspects of inarticulate speakers in *The Waste Land* where the "animal utterances represent a loss of tongue or speech brought about by timidity, mutilation, ignorance, or some other cause of reversion to an infantile or animal level" (453). There is a definite loss of humanity reflected in their loss of speech, which is foreshadowed in Eliot's early poetry.

both women and city poems together.

While the majority of the speakers in *Prufrock* display a sensitive and fragmentary nature, some poems in the collection unveil speakers who find no trouble conveying a certain message. Using satire as a way to portray certain characters, the speakers maintain a stable, coherent voice. From “The Boston Evening Transcript” to “Cousin Nancy,” the overall tone of the satirical poems is drastically different from that of the speaker with the Prufrockian temperament who is conscious about his relationship to his surroundings and people. There is nothing “gentle” about the way he addresses the character, despite being a relative of the speaker, as he aims to maintain his emotional distance. Unlike the other speakers with the Prufrockian temperament, he does not experience a failure of utterance as he discloses only certain aspects about the characters to reflect the critical views of Boston genteel society.

The main body of this thesis is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, the “woman poems” will be investigated. The speakers with the Prufrockian temperament struggle as they think about and even encounter the women. With the exception of “Conversation Galante,” there are few verbal exchanges between the speaker and the women, imagined or actual. The speaker aims to hide his fragmented consciousness behind a smile, but he experiences more

chaos as he loses control in both reality and imagination. The instability increases when the speakers fear being exposed by the women, and try to find other ways to escape their influence. However, he finds himself unable to get rid of the “lingering” women that leave him in a passive and hesitant state.

In the second chapter, the absence of human agency and the nonhuman objects’ substitution of the speaker’s subjectivity will be explored in the city poems. Specifically, the utterance of the street-lamp in “Rhapsody” proves how the speaker’s fragmented state prevents him from establishing his subject position. Instead, the speaker acknowledges only what the lamp directs and loses control over his utterance. Resembling the speakers in the women poems, the speakers experience difficulty in telling a particular story about the various observations. Although the speakers in “Rhapsody,” “Preludes,” and “Morning” all give up their subject position to the nonhuman objects, their sensitivity and keen awareness about the mechanical world, and their inability to adapt to it, show how they too still retain the Prufrockian temperament.

In the last chapter, the satires in *Prufrock* will be analyzed where the speaker with the Prufrockian temperament is no longer present. Instead, the speaker utilizes satire to criticize the Boston ideals that are present in other characters in the poem. As the speaker moves from describing a certain Boston newspaper, “The Boston Evening

Transcript" to people like "Aunt Helen" and "Cousin Nancy," he treats his relatives more as "satiric object[s]" (Mayer 167) than actual people. Although the manner he addresses his relatives differs from poem to poem, the similarity among the speakers lies in their successful poetic utterance. As the speaker concentrates solely on the characters and refuses to describe his personal thoughts on the matter, he succeeds in presenting other characters which ironically reflects his critical views despite being objective throughout. He may have succeeded in his poetic utterance, but he hides behind his satire, denying a concrete self. The two contrasting speakers, one with the Prufrockian temperament and the other with satirical interests, reveal the difficulty in establishing subjectivity.

1. The Prufrockian Temperament

Unlike his Romantic predecessors whose poems often establish a unified self, T. S. Eliot frequently dramatizes an unstable and fragmentary self from the first poem in *Prufrock and Other Observations* to the very last. Significantly, Eliot departs from the dramatic monologue, a form which many critics believe the poem, "The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock" follows.⁵ However, a contrast to Robert Browning's speaker whose "spoken speech" towards a specific auditor is "organized and communicated thought" (Mayer 11), Eliot's speakers, including J. Alfred Prufrock, do not have the leisure to organize their thoughts, nor do they have the ability to communicate them to a specific auditor. Instead, they shy away from confrontation and communication as their acute sensitivity and anxiety prevent them from speaking out loud.

Specifically, the "women poems," or the poems where a male speaker addresses a female character, imagined or real, demonstrate the effect she has over his consciousness, leading to a failure of utterance except in the case of "Conversation Galante." The speaker attempts to establish his subject position, but fails as he struggles in front of the imagined or actual female characters. The main reason lies in his sensitivity, or "Prufrockian temperament," that Prufrock shares

⁵ Grover Smith acknowledges that "[a]s a monologue, it owes a good deal to Browning" (15).

with other speakers affected by the women. Although his consciousness is not stable to begin with, the speaker experiences more chaos and disorder when the woman overwhelms his thoughts as demonstrated in "Hysteria." This also occurs in "Portrait of a Lady," where the speaker finds difficulty in his interaction with the older woman. In "Prufrock" and "La Figlia che Piange," however, the speakers direct their attention at a woman who is brought to life in their consciousness. Both poems present a pattern of "doing and undoing" of utterance as they unveil their unfulfilled desires, especially toward the female character. Within their consciousness, they imagine changing the course of events; however, these statements only display the extreme differences between imagination and reality. No matter how much they try to "revise" the past, the poems confirm their failure, since they do not actually commit to anything they say and cannot reverse time.

Prufrock, the main model of a fragmented speaker, cannot establish his subject position, in spite of his numerous attempts to claim subjectivity. It is interesting to see how the poem starts out with an epigraph from Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, where Guido illuminates how he has ended up in the Inferno. In it, he explains that he is only telling the visitors, Dante and Virgil, about his deeds since he believes that they belong to the dead (Williamson 58). In other words, despite the fact that Dante does eventually leave the Inferno, Guido believes

his statement cancels itself, because those who enter cannot return from the dead to tell the tale.⁶ Likewise, Prufrock appears to be stuck in a kind of hell where his speech eventually cancels itself as he speaks only “for a hundred visions and revisions” (33). Even though he longs to “dare” (34) and “presume” (54), he is only revising parts of his consciousness. Therefore, his utterance only contains fragments of his subjectivity which cannot be made complete, especially since he continues to think “In a minute there is time / For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse” (47-48).

He attempts to establish his subjectivity through numerous metaphors, which make up for the absence of a stable self. In other words, these fragments depict Prufrock as he tries to establish his identity in the poem. At the beginning of the poem, he depicts “the evening [which] is spread out against the sky / Like a patient etherised upon a table” (2-3). Through his comparison between the “evening” and the “patient,” he gives the readers a glimpse of his

⁶ The epigraph depicts the scene where Guido tells Dante and Virgil about his wrongdoings, “for the sin of fraud through evil counsel” (Smith 17). Therefore, his belief that his words will not be repeated or remembered leads him to confess. Guido is led to believe that Dante is part of hell and unable to escape, stuck in the same situation as himself. As John T. Mayer argues, “The Guido of the epigraph, who, like Prufrock, is obsessed with his image in the eyes of others, admits in the lines that immediately precede those of the epigraph that he knows ‘each winding way,’ as Prufrock does the ways of the masquerade” (119). Prufrock mirrors Guido, especially since he tries to cancel his words by not committing to anything. Without any restriction of time, his “thoughts move from the future tense to the past, back to the future [...] and to the conditional [...] and to the past conditional” (Scofield 59), as he is also led to believe that no one is actually looking into his internal thoughts. However, like Guido, Prufrock is confessing what he is trying to hide from others.

unstable condition. Martin Scofield observes how “[i]t is as if the external, social world were contained within an enveloping subjectivity, a process that is also enacted within individual poems: the social world of Prufrock is perceived as images which inhabit his mind” (56). The different images reflect Prufrock who is “etherised,” unable to control his own numb, passive self. The lethargic mood is only accentuated in the portrayal of the “yellow fog” (15) that the speaker depicts in great detail. The slow and lazy movement of the “yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes” (16) is similar to the speaker’s slow movement throughout the poem, especially when one imagines him “walk[ing] upon the beach” (122). The similarity between the cat-like fog which “lingered upon the pools” (18) and Prufrock who has “lingered in the chambers of the sea” (129) also demonstrates how the description of the atmosphere captures a glimpse of Prufrock’s state of mind. To be more specific, Prufrock disperses his consciousness into the atmosphere, as his portrayal of both “the evening” (2) and “the yellow fog” (15) reflects his inertia and decentralization.

The portrayal of Prufrock’s consciousness continues in the image of the sleeping “afternoon” (75), which is “[s]moothed by long fingers, / Asleep...tired...or...malingers” (76-77) to reflect his ennui. Like the “yellow fog” (15), the afternoon “here beside you and me” (78) is petted to a state of sleep and laziness, a state in which Prufrock

also finds himself. Similar to Guido, Prufrock is stuck within a “hell,” unable to escape from the environment his fragmented consciousness remains. It is dispersed “as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen” (105), and the speaker has no control over it. This diverges from the Romantic tradition where the individual’s connection to his environment helps him establish his subjectivity.⁷ Through this difference, Eliot verifies how difficult it is to distinguish between the individual and its environment; the boundaries between the two fade as the individual’s subjectivity is questioned.

As a matter of fact, the speaker’s subjectivity becomes less distinct when he borrows the identity of John the Baptist and Lazarus. In his allusion to the former, he claims that he is “no prophet” (83), even when he has “wept and fasted, wept and prayed” (81); however, the description—“I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) / brought in upon a platter” (82-83)—seems to suggest that he is actually observing a fragmented piece of himself. This is similar to the way Prufrock observes himself as one of the onlookers, pointing out the “bald spot in the middle of [his] hair” (40). Moreover, he does not resemble Lazarus, whom he names when he wonders whether to assert: “I am Lazarus, come from the dead, / Come back to tell you all,

⁷ In the Romantic tradition, it is usually the speaker’s relationship with nature which helps him establish his subjectivity. In “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey,” Wordsworth emphasizes how the experience with nature shapes his identity and establishes his “self.” While the Wordsworthian speaker is in control of the experience, Prufrock has no control over his “self.”

I shall tell you all” (94-95). While the biblical figure is silent after having been brought from the dead, Prufrock’s version of Lazarus is the figure who will “tell you all,” having “come from the dead.” However, Prufrock does not tell “all,” only imagining what he will not eventually do. He simply borrows the names of John the Baptist and Lazarus without any commitment, dropping any connection he has made with them as he moves on in the poem. “Prufrock,” as Smith notes, “denies all roles that would ‘stretch’ him” (125). Like Guido, he continues the process of “doing and undoing” nothing within his internal hell.

Throughout the poem, Prufrock discloses continuously that he lacks a unified self and his utterance contains fragments of desire and imagination. Furthermore, his consciousness weakens when he emphasizes what the imagined woman should say: “That is not what I meant at all. / That is not it, at all” (97-98). His frustrated response— “It is impossible to say just what I mean!” (104)—highlights how she affects his inability to speak aloud as well. Wandering within his hell, he thinks about many possibilities but then withdraws from his thoughts. Prufrock hesitates throughout the poem, afraid of committing to his thoughts or desires. However, he seems satisfied in seeing time as limitless, where the only important time is “before” (34) and “after” (88) teatime. He tries to linger as long as he can before “human voices wake [him], and [he] drown[s]” (131). He does not

return to reality, where he can “tell . . . all,” but refuses to face the “overwhelming question” (10), contemplating his right “to be or not to be,”⁸ as he creates the pattern of “doing and undoing” in his consciousness.

Resembling Prufrock, the male speaker in “La Figlia che Piange” also seems to experience difficulty with the present state and attempts to revise his “cogitations” (23). In fact, the speaker endeavors to reenact the past concerning a woman who “lingers” in his consciousness. At first, his utterance suggests that the person whom he is giving the set of directions is in his presence. The fact that he uses imperatives, “Stand on” (1), “Lean on” (2), and “Clasp your flowers to you” (4), contributes to that effect, as if the woman with “the sunlight in [her] hair” (3) is listening. In other words, it seems that he is “doing” something by speaking out loud to her. However, he later exposes that he has been only “undoing” his memory since the woman he addresses is not present. Like Prufrock, he thinks about what could have been different than the present situation, imagining how he “would have had her stand and grieve” (9), which is different from the actual parting. The speaker continues to look for a way to deal with the heartache that “amaze[s] / The troubled midnight and the noon’s

⁸The overwhelming question mentioned at the beginning of the poem may be related to the question that Hamlet ponders over: “to be or not to be” (*Ham.* 3.1.55). “To be” would signify returning to reality, while “not to be” would be lingering in a state of death, or in Prufrock’s case, paralysis and inertia within his consciousness.

repose" (23-24). It is only in his imagination that the girl with "[h]er hair over her arms and her arms full of flowers" (20) is standing while he leaves, and only in his consciousness that he can revise his actions as well as hers.

Revision, therefore, occurs when there is something wrong or in need of improvement. The speaker wishes to relieve the pain from the past by revising what has happened with another possibility:

So he would have left
As the soul leaves the body torn and bruised,
As the mind deserts the body it has used.
I should find
Some way incomparably light and deft,
Some way we both should understand,
Simple and faithless as a smile and shake of the hand.

(10-16)

Through his utterance, he senses that there is "some way," possibly less painful to him, to part with his lover. Since he is, in reality, the one who feels "torn and bruised" after the parting, he tries to "undo" his pain by capturing her as the one who feels the pain of being left behind. By portraying the man's departure as a kind of violent desertion, the speaker suggests that there is nothing "light and deft" in the separation. He may attempt to find "some way" to collect his feelings, but he can only disguise his pain with "a smile," a mask

which other speakers with a Prufrockian temperament utilize. What is a great torment for the speaker has been repressed into a smile, similar to how Prufrock wonders, "Would it have been worth while, / To have bitten off the matter with a smile [?]" (90-91). In actuality, the speakers in "La Figlia che Piange" and "Prufrock" hide their feelings behind their smiles, intending to seem unhindered externally. As Prufrock reflects, "There will be time, there will be time / To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet" (26-27). The "prepared face" is only to disguise the speaker's fragmented and unstable state, which is further affected by the imagined female character.

Unlike these two speakers, the speaker in "Portrait of a Lady" is in the presence of an actual female character; however, he also exhibits his Prufrockian temperament when he remains passive, relying on masks to disguise his unstable state. In front of the lady, he "smile[s]" (50), but hidden within the smile is his attempt to control the internal chaos. Consequently, the "self-possession" (94) he tries to grasp onto is closely related to the masking of his fragmented consciousness. While he attempts to maintain his self-composure himself, the poem indicates that it is mainly the incongruous relationship with the woman that makes it difficult for him to act freely or assume the subject position.

It is precisely the reason why the beginning of the poem captures the extent of the lady's influence through his close attention

to her words:

Among the smoke and fog of a December afternoon
You have the scene arrange itself—as it will seem to
do—
With 'I have saved this afternoon for you';
And four wax candles in the darkened room,
Four rings of light upon the ceiling overhead,
An atmosphere of Juliet's tomb (1-6)

While the “smoke and fog” seem to dissipate anything solid, the speaker hints that the female character who has control over the “afternoon” by claiming to have “saved” it “for him” (3). The speaker shows no control over the events, passively observing as she sets the “darkened room” (4) with “four wax candles” for him. Aware of the deadly “atmosphere,” he cannot bring himself to speak despite being “Prepared for all the things to be said, or left unsaid” (7). Meanwhile, the lady takes the speaking position instead as she tries to “save” their relationship. The speaker's silence is a clear juxtaposition to the woman's spoken words, accentuated by the quotation marks. The thoughts or even spoken words in parenthesis—“(For indeed I do not love it...you knew? You are not blind! / How keen you are!)” (22-23)—are not his but the lady's, proving how he has no control over the direction of his utterance or actions.

While he is clearly not interested in the lady's advances, she

tries to emphasize their mutual interest in the “intimate” (9) music of Chopin. As Smith points out, “the lady’s attempt to compose emotional harmony between them on the pretext of such intellectual sympathy is so unattractive to her companion that he hardly takes it seriously” (11). In spite of the lack of response, the lady speaks in a repetitive and decorous manner, as if she is trying to capture the wandering attention of the male speaker. Meanwhile, the speaker proves that her words only cause him to lose further control as the music they have “resurrected” (11) plays a different tune in his consciousness: “Inside my brain a dull tom-tom begins / Absurdly hammering a prelude of its own” (32-33). In addition to lacking control over the relationship, he does not have control over his own consciousness, as it plays on “its own.”

The only action the speaker can control is to leave the woman’s private sphere:

--Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance,
Admire the monuments,
Discuss the late events,
Correct our watches by the public clocks.

Then sit for half an hour and drink our bocks. (36-40)

While the woman is always “serving tea to friends” (68) indoors, the speaker replaces tea for “bocks” outdoors. By concentrating on the “public clocks” and “monuments,” which are solid and stable, he finds

himself part of a mechanical order only for a short while. According to John T. Mayer, there is a definite boundary between the woman's world and the "public" world:

The poem insistently points up the contrast between the outdoor public world of male domination—with its "events," "monuments" to male heroes and "public" figures, and "public clocks" that call men to their worldly responsibilities and measure their half-hours of relaxation—and the indoor domestic world of the woman—a single room that is identified by both parties with the life of feelings and, tellingly, with death. (111-12)

He leaves the lady's private world, where she seems to be confined to as she emphasizes that she "shall sit here, serving tea to friends" (68). Escaping to the public world, the speaker does not have to worry about hiding his anxiety and forgets the chaos within his consciousness.

Despite aligning his time with the mechanical world, he gradually loses control over his emotions as he reflects on her words. In contrast to the lady who "feel[s] immeasurably at peace, and find[s] the world / To be wonderful and youthful, after all" (54-55), he feels anxious and vulnerable when he recalls her words. He asks, "how can I make a cowardly amends / For what she has said to me?" (69-70), as

he wonders about her desire for his "friendship" (66). Within this question, the speaker acknowledges the effects of the woman's utterance and their unbalanced relationship on him. Within her words, she points out his failure to respond, when she states that "youth is cruel, and has no more remorse / And smiles at situations which it cannot see" (48-49). However, the speaker admits his "remorse" through his question, and experiences difficulty controlling the "situation" with the lady. The question lingers within his mind as he goes on with his daily activities, and like the speakers in "Prufrock" and "La Figlia che Piange," his consciousness is affected by the woman even when he is alone. Even though he wants to "remain self-possessed" (78) or have control over his feelings, he confirms his instability when he listens to a "street-piano" (79) "With the smell of hyacinths across the garden / Recalling things that other people have desired" (81-82). "Recalling" the woman's desire, he cannot "keep [his] countenance" (77) as he struggles to control his fragmented consciousness. On the one hand, he wonders whether he can make any "amends" to her words, but on the other, he feels burdened by the relationship. Similar to his decision to avoid further confrontation and leave for the outdoors, he leaves altogether.

His decision to leave altogether is a "cowardly" escape from her presence without having to reject her advances upfront. While it should be liberating for him, it becomes burdensome, as can be seen in

the way he “mount[s] the stairs and turn[s] the handle of the door / And feel[s] as if [he] had mounted on [his] hands and knees” (86-87). Unlike Prufrock who climbs the stairs only to come back down (“Time to turn back and descend the stair,” 39), his climb up the stairs is to finally face what he has been avoiding and desiring at the same time; he wishes to be free from her influence, but does not want to confront the situation. Interestingly enough, his announcement of his leave-taking is excluded and it is the woman’s utterance which inhabits not only the poem but the speaker’s consciousness as well. Her response is ironic, because although she does not outwardly prevent him from leaving, she asks about his “return” (88) in a kind of nonchalant manner. As in response, the speaker continues to smile, attempting to mask the instability which occurs with the knowledge of her intentions. This is why he reacts, “*This* is as I had reckoned” (95; emphasis original) when she requests that he write to her, and his “self-possession” (94) wavers when he understands that she will continue to cling unto him.

Although the speaker wishes to free himself from any ties to her, she expresses her desire to hear from him even with the long distance and urges for a “friendship.” The speaker realizes after he observes himself in the third-person perspective—“feel[ing] like one who smiles, and turning shall remark / Suddenly, his expression in a glass” (99-100)—that the distance will have no effect over his unstable

condition. His “self-possession gutters” (101) and he understands that they will never be able to understand the other (“we are really in the dark,” 101). As Ward observes, “The contrast between the two is for possession; the poignancy of the Lady’s failure to gain possession of the young man’s friendship is matched by his anxiety to keep *self-possession*” (27; emphasis original). She longs for any way to keep in touch, but hands over the decision-making to the speaker with “Perhaps *you* can write to me” (93; emphasis added). Claiming that she “can hardly understand” (104) why they have “not developed into friends” (98), she places the blame on him. Already feeling guilty for his leave-taking, he simply cannot find a way to “find expression” (110) and turns to circus animals:

...dance, dance

Like a dancing bear,

Cry like a parrot, chatter like an ape. (110-112)

Without providing the details of his response, he claims that he “must borrow every changing shape / To find expression” (109-110). By claiming that he must use “every changing shape,” he implies that even aimless and uncomprehensive chatter are more reliable than his own voice in a desperate attempt to express his feelings. In a manner resembling Prufrock, described as “sprawling on a pin” (57) or “a pair of ragged claws” (73), the speaker conveys a sense of helplessness and humiliation in his portrayal of his gestures. Nonetheless, he manages

to escape the conflict of interests: "Let us take the air, in a tobacco
trance -" (113). At a glance, it may seem that he has successfully
escaped from her by going abroad but similar to the speaker in "La
Figlia che Piange," he finds that even in their separation, she still
lingers within his thoughts. The hyphen at the end of the line also
indicates how leaving to "take the air" is no longer effective, since
although he can escape her in reality, he continues to feel "remorse"
and wonders whether he is "right or wrong" (83).

When thinking about her death, he does not feel satisfaction
nor peace, but more confusion. What should bring a sense of freedom
and relief leaves him in a more fragmented state:

Doubtful, for a while

Not knowing what to feel or if I understand

Or whether wise or foolish, tardy or too soon... (118-20)

Unable to comprehend his mixed feelings, he goes on to comment that
"[t]his music is successful with a 'dying fall'" (122). The mention of
"successful" is a reminder of the lady's belief that he will "go on, and
when [he has] prevailed / [He] can say: at this point many a one has
failed" (62-63). However, the speaker's doubts attest to how he has
"failed," even though he has moved on. While he is free from her
physically, he cannot help but think that she would "have the
advantage" (121) even in her death, since his efforts to escape are
unsuccessful. Like the "lilac stalks" (46) twisted by the lady's hands,

his consciousness is entwined with her desire and words. In other words, “the Lady, or the memory of her, has become an element of the male [speaker]’s self” (Ward 28).

As Carol Christ observes, “The poem thus comes to the end of its contest of voices, a contest it concedes to the Lady” (26). It is her “insistent” (56) voice which has made its presence in the poem and will remain in the speaker’s consciousness. Contrasting to Barabas in the epigraph, who after having “committed – / Fornication” does not feel any remorse, the speaker experiences doubt and confusion about his encounter with the lady.⁹ The “portrait” of her will never leave the speaker’s consciousness, and he feels as if he has “committed” a crime. Like the speaker in “La Figlia che Piange,” he seems to want to do everything over in the way he visualizes. However, it is impossible for him to revise their relationship, since she has already replaced his subject position.

All the speakers in the three poems do not speak to the female character, actual or imagined and their consciousness follows a pattern of doing and undoing as they imagine what they will say to the female characters, only to refrain from saying it aloud. Their similarities lie in hiding behind “masks,” which display a calm and composed exterior,

⁹ In the epigraph, Eliot has combined the exchange between Friar Barnardine and Barabas in Christopher Marlowe’s play *The Jew of Malta*. In the play, Barabas interrupts the Friar’s conviction with by answering with the right sin, “Fornication,” without a sense of any guilt. By combining the two separate lines into one, it highlights the moral ambiguity within Barabas’ confession.

while their minds deal with the disarray and chaos ensued because of the situation regarding the women. In spite of their attempts of “self-possession” and escape from the women, they find themselves confronting the women in their imagination as they try to undo the situation in order to find some control. Like these speakers, the speaker in “Hysteria” also experiences chaos and unease in the presence of a woman. While he does not try to escape from her, he does attempt to find some sort of order. It is precisely the alarm and anxiety affecting the speaker’s consciousness that attest to his Prufrockian temperament.

Similar to Prufrock who believes that he is part of the ridicule he imagines, the speaker senses that he is “becoming *involved* in her laughter and *being part of it*” (32; emphasis added). Whether he wants to become part of her laughter or not, he has no control over this situation as he feels engulfed by the woman: “I was drawn in by short gasps, inhaled at each momentary recover, lost finally in the dark caverns of her throat, bruised by the ripple of unseen muscles” (32). The description suggests that the laughter means something more than a reoccurring sound; there is something ominous and violent within the gesture. Also, it implicates how the speaker is merely passive as the laughter takes away his subjectivity; in his consciousness, she draws him in, inhales him and bruises him.

In this situation, the speaker cannot simply smile to hide his

pain or chaos and he does not say anything to stop her. In his place, another male character, "an elderly waiter with trembling hands" intervenes. Although the speaker fails to establish his speaking position, the man with "trembling hands" speaks on his behalf as he attempts to hide the situation by moving them towards the "garden," a more private place. The speaker does not mention whether they had followed the waiter's suggestion or not, and instead indicates that her laughter is ongoing when he mentions "the shaking of her breasts," a movement associated with laughter. He does not consider directly stopping her from laughing, since he cannot speak nor act; in other words, he will neither tell her to stop nor physically detain her. Instead, he remains passive as he "concentrate[s] [his] attention with careful subtlety," waiting for her to "end" her "hysteria."

This passivity demonstrates the speaker's Prufrockian temperament as well as his inability to claim subjectivity. The fact that his own memory "of the afternoon" is dispersed and in need of unification demonstrates the inability for the speaker to establish his subject position. He can only collect "some of the fragments of the afternoon" if and when the woman stops laughing. Therefore, the speaker has to watch and wait for the woman to stop, discovering his own way to handle the chaos. According to Christ, "[f]or Eliot, poetic representation of a powerful female presence created difficulty in embodying the male" (30). The "powerful female presence"

overwhelms the speaker to the extent that he is unable to act, speak, or “collect” his fragmented consciousness. Mirroring the other speakers in the poems, he seeks to escape from the woman, but it seems impossible as the deliberately unresolved ending suggests that his consciousness is still fragmented and uncollected.

In all four poems, the male speaker fails to establish his subjectivity as he finds himself affected by the woman and his unstable consciousness. The woman intensifies the Prufrockian speaker’s instability when he cannot take control of the chaos brought by her presence. In addition, he does not possess the voice to speak out loud. It is only in “Conversation Galante,” however, where the speaker finally engages in a conversation with a female character, whose short and condescending responses leave the speaker in the same isolated and frustrated state as the other speakers. Grover Smith explains the pattern of the dialogue between the speaker and the woman:

‘a poem of seriocomic banter: a young man of rapid wit engages the attention of an extremely bewildered lady with playful poetic speculations on the moon as ‘Prester John’s balloon’ or as a misleading ‘old battered lantern’ – an imaginative exercise which she does not follow.’ (26)

The way the speaker combines the different analogies of the moon into one observation is reminiscent of the Prufrock’s tendency to combine

different fragments together ("After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor," 102-03). While the speaker understands the connection between the fragments, the woman cannot follow this "imaginative exercise," which leads her to remark: "How you digress!" (6). Despite facing this rejection, similar to the imagined woman in "Prufrock" who would say "That is not what I meant at all" (110), the speaker attempts to get her attention by claiming that "Someone frames upon the keys / That exquisite nocturne" (7-8). In fact, it is no different from the lady's attempt in "Portrait" to find the intimate connection between the man and herself within music; however, the woman differs from the lady in "Portrait" and asks, "Does this refer to me?" (11), avoiding any ties to him. She does not try to understand the witty speaker, only rejecting him with a short reply.

While the speaker succeeds in finally speaking out loud, he still experiences the difficulty in conveying what he wants to say to the female character. He then becomes frustrated to the point where he claims that "it is [he] who [is] inane" (12) and accuses her of being "The eternal enemy of the absolute" (14). The bitterness that the speaker feels towards the woman reminds the reader of the speaker in "La Figlia che Piange" who attempts to revise the cold woman into one with "a fugitive resentment in [her] eyes" (6). However, the female characters are aloof and cold and it is always the male speaker who is affected by how he imagines they will say or react. That is why the

speaker's accusation in "Conversation Galante" that the woman has an "air indifferent and imperious" (16) with the power to "confute" (17) speaks for the other speakers. Prufrock imagines the woman "settling a pillow by her head" (96) or "turning toward the window" (108), presumably with an "indifferent" attitude towards him. Likewise, the girl whom the speaker in "La Figlia che Piange" imagines "stand[ing] and griev[ing]" (9) may have been indifferent in the actual parting. While the lady in "Portrait of a Lady" is not so indifferent to the speaker, she has the power to "confute," especially in her demands for friendship. Thus, the speaker in "Conversation Galante" echoes the emotions and anxiety felt by speakers of past works.

The woman in "Conversation Galante" interrupts with the question "Are we then so serious?" (18), ending the poem without the speaker's response. The question confirms the speaker's Prufrockian temperament which reveals his sensitivity, which she mistakes for seriousness. In the five poems, the female characters, imagined or actual, possess more control over the situations and leave the male speakers in a state of frustration and isolation. They are unaware and indifferent to the speaker's situation, oftentimes taking the speaking position to say what they want without any concern for the speaker. The speaker's unstable consciousness weakens in their presence as he fails to establish his subject position.

As demonstrated in this chapter, the speaker fails to gain

control over his surroundings and his own unstable consciousness. He especially experiences great disorder and anxiety in front of the women, resulting in his attempt to escape or hide behind a "mask." In some cases, the speaker considers subhuman gestures to escape any confrontation between them. While the women seem to be more capable than the male speakers in establishing their speaking position, the depiction of the female body parts, with the "teeth [which] were only accidental stars with a talent for squad-drill" ("Hysteria), illustrates the chaotic effect they have on him even though they do not intend to harm him. The speakers' passivity, silence, and anxiety identify them as speakers with the Prufrockian temperament, whose relationship with the women directly affect their utterance. With the absence of the female characters, however, the nonhuman agents begin to overtake the speaking and acting positions in "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," "Preludes," and "Morning at the Window" as the speakers remain silent and passive in the isolated urban landscape.

2. The Nonhuman Agent

In Chapter 1, the speaker's unstable consciousness and Prufrockian temperament destabilize his subject position, resulting in his silence and passivity; meanwhile, the women, imagined or actual, in the poems, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "Portrait of a Lady," and "La Figlia che Piange," seem to have a more stable subject position. In some of the early poems, the failure of utterance results in handing over agency to nonhuman agents, such as the objects that comprise the speaker's environments. According to William Harmon, "[n]onverbal utterances or verbal utterances by nonhuman agents usually betoken loss" (453). Even in "Prufrock," there are moments where the nonhuman agents display human aspects. The "streets that follow like a tedious argument / Of insidious intent" (8-9) reveal how nonhuman agents, such as the street, copy human behavior. Harmon claims that "The insistent lane and the argumentative streets...suggest one kind of personification, which provides at least the illusion of human or pseudohuman agency" (452). While only an animal or human being can "follow" the speaker, the "streets," which are placed down by people and are immobile, follow him not in silence but with words "[o]f insidious intent." Judging by the ominous qualities of the street, the reader senses that the nonhuman agents do not serve to compensate the speaker's loss of agency. In other words, the nonhuman agents do not emphasize their presence to support the

speaker, but their presence only stresses the speaker's fragmented and unstable consciousness.

Interestingly, the nonhuman agents emulate human activity, even more so in "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" and "Preludes" where the speaker becomes a passive figure. It is especially in "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" that the nonhuman agent, the "street-lamp" (16), is handed over the speaking position. The lamp directs at other human characters, such as the "woman" (16) and "child" (38), as lacking human qualities. The speaker merely becomes an auditor as he does what the "mutter[ing]" (15) lamp instructs him, especially when the speaker's voice is replaced by the lamp.

Right from the beginning, the speaker lacks all control as the "Whispering lunar incantations / Dissolve the floors of memory" (4-5). Although his memory belongs to him, he has no power over the "nocturnal voices that . . . ensorcell [his] midnight ramble while the moon hypnotizes the deserted street" (Smith 24). The speaker later reveals how it is also the "midnight [which] shakes the memory / As a madman shakes a dead geranium" (11). According to James Olney, "the midnight dissolution of 'the floors of memory' signifies something like the disintegration of ego, the loss of an integrated identity or selfhood—hence the surrealist and hallucinatory images that assault the consciousness of that poem" (68). The speaker's "selfhood," or subjectivity, is no longer whole, since memory and "all

its clear relations, / Its divisions and precision" (6-7) are all "dissolve[d]" (5). The description of "midnight" reveals the incapability for the speaker to collect the fragments of his memory; compared to "a dead geranium," memory cannot be brought back to life in spite of the violent attempts to resurrect it. Slightly louder than the "whispering lunar incantations," the "street lamp that [the speaker] pass[es] / Beats like a fatalistic drum" (8-9; emphasis added). The sounds of both the "midnight" and "street lamp" make up for the silence of the speaker. According to Harmon, "silence suggests a loss of articulate speech and an inability to do anything in words or actions effectively" (451). Unlike the two nonhuman agents, the speaker lacks both "articulate speech" and capability to act on his own, relying on them for direction and realization.

As a substitute for the speaker, the street-lamp directs attention on certain happenings on the streets. In particular, what the "street-lamp" says to the speaker about his surroundings reflects the mechanization of individual beings. According to Mayer, the speaker "roams the streets seeking revelation, but finds only a mechanistic world, and people driven by sordid instincts" (69). Likewise, it is interesting that the street-lamp points out the external appearances, or what can be seen with the eye, which reveal the "sordid" conditions of the characters. In a way, it is shedding light on what would remain in the dark.

The first character whom the street-lamp directs the speaker's attention is the woman who "hesitates towards [the speaker]" (17) in front of "the door / Which opens on her like a grin" (17-18). The street-lamp's observations focus only on an aspect of the woman, only on a fragment because the "light of the door" (17) focuses on a specific part of the woman. Although the street-lamp's perception may be limited, its attention on "the border of her dress" (19) and "the corner of her eye" (21) reveals enough about her state. The "sordid" characteristics of the "torn and stained" (20) dress reflect her desolation, and the attention to her eye which "Twists like a crooked pin" (22) focuses on her fragmented and automatic aspect. The depiction of dehumanized parts of people also occurs in "Morning at the Window," where the "brown waves of fog toss up to [the speaker] / *Twisted* faces from the bottom of the street" (5-6; emphasis added). Resembling the jagged and sharp portraits in Wyndham Lewis' *Tyros and Portraits*,¹⁰ the twisted faces signify loss of humanness as the familiar features of the face are contorted. It would be difficult for any human agent to see with "twisted faces" or a "twisted" eye. Although the speaker does not include a portrayal of his own features, the street-lamp's commands to "Regard" (16), "see" (19), and "[r]emark" (35) demonstrate how the

¹⁰ The images that Wyndham Lewis produced as "tyros" are portraits of men with very toothy smiles and sharp features that made the faces look unfamiliar, almost machine-like. Some pictures feature faces that are geometrical, but not symmetrical. The eyes in the self-portrait, *Mr Wyndham Lewis as a Tyro* (1921), are twisted with no sense of direction.

human subject cannot even grasp onto his sensory perceptions and hints at the speaker's inability to act on his own. The speaker's eye is then governed by the street-lamp, which replaces his voice as well.

As Mayer observes, the eye is "a specification of the imagery of bodily parts that will, in 'Preludes' convey the utter mechanization of humanity, the reduction of people to collections of parts, instrumentalities 'that the strength has left'" (82). In "Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar," a poem from *Poems 1920*, the description of "A lusterless protrusive eye / Star[ing] from the protozoic slime" (17-18) suggests that there is no consciousness behind the eye; rather than being mechanized, the eye from "Burbank" has no hint of humanity at all, belonging to "protozoic slime." Although the poem belongs to the collection that comes after *Prufrock and Other Observations*, it indicates the concurrent symbolic meaning of the eye through the mechanization and dehumanization of the characters. On the other hand, it is not only in "Preludes" but also in "Rhapsody" that people are reduced to "collection of parts" (Mayer 82). When the street-lamp speaks for a second time, it focuses on the "cat which flattens itself in the gutter" (35), and the speaker compares the cat's tongue which "devours a morsel of rancid butter" (37) with "the hand of the child, automatic, / [which] Slipped out and pocketed a toy that was running along the quay" (38-39). In mentioning the cat whose tongue instinctively "devours," the speaker sheds light on how the

child's movement is automatic. The child's quick and automatic action is a portrayal of his mechanization. In addition, the comparison between "the rancid butter" and the toy that the child has "pocketed" only reveals how desolate his condition is, where his agency is similar to or less than the cat.

As the street-lamp indicates towards the fragmented pieces of the street, it replaces the "eye" of the speaker. Without the "street-lamp," the speaker would literally be blind in the darkness. The street-lamp's utterance also plays an important part in the speaker's consciousness, especially since his "dissolve[d]" memory is in fragments. The street-lamp's words, such as "twists" (22), "eye" (21), "slips" (36), "smells" (58), also reappear in the speaker's fragmented consciousness throughout the poem. After the street-lamp fixes the speaker's attention on the woman's "twist[ed]" eye, "The memory throws up high and dry / A crowd of twisted things" (23-24). Again, it is not the speaker who recollects these fragments, but the memory which "throws up" (23) the "twisted" objects:

A twisted branch upon the beach

Eaten smooth, and polished

As if the world gave up

The secret of its skeleton,

Stiff and white.

A broken spring in a factory yard,

Rust that clings to the form that the strength has left
Hard and curled and ready to snap. (23-32)

The juxtaposition between “a twisted branch” and “a broken spring” is crucial, since the main similarity between the two objects is their “twisted” shape. One is naturally twisted, and the other is manufactured to have its curly shape; however, there are also many similarities between the two. Similar to the speaker, the fragmented pieces are very delicate, prone to break within the tension. Both have been changed by their environment, though in different ways: the water which has “eaten smooth and polished” the branch and the oxygen that creates “rust” on the spring. In addition, both “branch” and “spring” are fragmented pieces of something larger: the former belongs to a tree, the latter to a machine. Mayer observes this combination as “the alliance of nature and machine [which] twists the soul out of people in the hellish night of city life, leaving behind only the mechanical automatons of behaviorism, not human beings” (82). As a part of the “mechanical automatons of behaviorism,” the memory lacks the ability to find the “clear relations” (6) between the two fragmented pieces and the speaker therefore depends on the street-lamp for sight and understanding, especially since he is blind without it.

The sudden shift from “street-lamp” (34) to “lamp” (47) implies a change of location. Before the clock strikes four, however, the “lamp”

directs attention to the moon, which it portrays as a female figure who is diseased with “washed-out smallpox crack[ing] her face” (56). She is personified as she “winks” (52), “smiles” (53), “smooths the hair of the grass” (54), and her hand “twists a paper rose” (57). In fact, she is similar to the speaker in many ways: she has “a feeble eye” (52) which signifies a loss of sight and has also “lost her memory” (55). She is “with all the old nocturnal smells / That cross and cross across her brain” (60-61), like the speaker whose “reminiscence” (62) includes:

Smells of chestnuts in the streets,
And female smells in shuttered rooms,
And cigarettes in corridors
And cocktail smells in bars. (65-68)

The smells of different places, from the outdoors to the indoors, seem to “come” (62) back to him in small fragments of the speaker’s “reminiscence.” In addition, the smells represent only a small part of each memory, since he fails to remember the people behind the smells; in other words, there are human beings who produce the smells, but they are erased and only the locations are listed, such as “the beach” (25) or the “factory yard” (30). Through the listing of locations and smells, the absence of a controlling human agency is highlighted, even in the speaker’s memory. They “cross and cross across” his brain, but they do not combine into one unity.

The speaker’s consciousness remains fragmented as he

processes the different pieces of his memory. He still relies on the “lamp” for direction when it directs the speaker to “the number on the door” (71), but the lamp’s announcement of the time, “Four o’clock” (70), indicates a drastic change. The lamp’s utterance replaces the speaker who was previously able to notice the change in time. Although the speaker noted the precise time to its minutes (“half-past one,” 13), the lamp is the last one to announce the time, finishing what “midnight” began at the beginning of the poem. The speaker cannot grasp onto his fragmented consciousness nor “Memory!” (72), which the lamp accentuates. He is simply like the “old crab with barnacles on his back” (44), passively “grip[ping] the end of a stick” (45), a sign of resignation.

The lamp’s occupation of what might have been the speaker’s subject position is further highlighted in the last lines:

The lamp said,
‘Four o’clock,
Here is the number on the door.
Memory!
You have the key,
The little lamp spreads a ring on the stair.
Mount.
The bed is open; the tooth-brush hangs on the wall,
Put your shoes at the door, sleep, prepare for life.’

The last twist of the knife. (69-78)

The lamp mentions "The little lamp [which] spreads a ring on the stair" (74) to indicate the stair that the speaker must "Mount" (75) in order to enter the room. The little lamp's light guides which direction the speaker must take, and lacking a stable subjectivity and consciousness, he is forced to depend on the lamp's commands. After having wandered around at night, he is finally ready for sleep, which "prepare[s]" him for the day, or "life." If he follows the lamp's instructions, his life will only be a repetition of a cyclic pattern of dependence on nonhuman agency. In fact, he realizes that it will be a continual replacing of his subjectivity in the final line, "The last twist of the knife" (78). Isolated from the previous lines, the statement captures the desperate movement of the knife without the speaker's control. According to Mayer, the speaker's final realization "subverts the engulfing automation...[since] his very *awareness* sets him apart from the automatic creatures gripped by instinctive behavior patterns of which they are unaware" (84; emphasis added). Although the speaker experiences difficulty controlling the fragments of his consciousness and memory, his awareness of the control of the nonhuman agents implies that his subjectivity is not completely mechanical like the "people" he portrays.

In "Preludes," too, the speaker experiences nonhuman agents' overwhelming influence. At the beginning of the poem, it is not the

speaker who performs any action, but the “winter evening [that] settles down / With smell of steaks in passageways” (1-2). Bearing resemblance to the speakers in “Prufrock” and “Rhapsody,” the speaker in “Preludes” places emphasis on the “evening” which “settles down,” an action that exhibits human behavior.¹¹ Likewise, the “smell of steaks in passageways” does not include the human subjects preparing the steaks, highlighting the absence of human agency and presence of the “evening.” The details about time and place are somewhat uniform in *Prufrock*, since “evenings, three of them, prevail among the opening and titles, as they do among the poems generally, and morning, afternoon, and night occur at the outset in the other poems” (Unger 94). In “The Boston Evening Transcript,” it is only “When evening quickens faintly in the street (3) that the “appetites of life in some” (4) are awakened. The evening’s significance increases as “some” people rely on its arrival for ambition, or “appetites of life.” In regards to the evening’s influence over the actions and desires of people, the reader understands that it is most likely the nonhuman agents who will have more stability and control in the poem than the speaker.

In addition, the descriptions about the “winter evening” in

¹¹ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word “settle” is defined as “to seat” or “to place (material things) in order.” To “settle down” means to “subside into indolence or contentment.” Although these two definitions apply to human activity or feeling, the winter evening acts as a replacement of the human subject position. The comparison in “Prufrock” where the evening is likened to a “patient” (3) also supports this point.

Section I are very similar to the descriptions of smells and twisted things in "Rhapsody" where the absence of human agency is highlighted. The lines that capture a moment, such as "And then the lighting of the lamps" (13), depict a situation where the human agent is erased while the nonhuman agents' presence is noted. It is similar to "The last twist of the knife" (78), which implicates that the knife is acting on its own even without the speaker's involvement. Nonhuman agents assert their presence in various ways, which the speaker's consciousness acknowledges. According to A. D. Moody, the poem "exhibit[s] the mind of the poet operating directly upon his experience and making up a vision almost exclusively from the data of his sordid and unromantic world" (23). While it is questionable whether the poem exhibits the "mind of the poet," it does reveal the mind of the speaker who gathers his observations of "his sordid and unromantic world" in small fragments. The speaker's state of mind may be unstable, but he exhibits the same awareness of the time, "Six o'clock" (3), as in the speaker's acknowledgement of time in "Rhapsody," which gives the speaker some systematic order. Nonetheless, the speaker's subject position is questioned as the nonhuman agents become more prominent in the poem.

While the street-lamp speaks in "Rhapsody," the nonhuman agents in "Preludes" do not speak and it is mostly their replacing of subject position which is emphasized when their actions are

personified. Similar to how the evening “settles down” (1), “The morning *comes to* consciousness / Of faint stale smells of beer” (14-15; emphasis added); the time of day seems to exhibit human behavior through the smells associated with that time. The “faint stale smells of beer” only highlight the passivity or inactiveness of human agents who have drunk the beer; the indication to the “smells of steaks in passageways” (2) emphasizes the people who have been replaced by the “winter evening.”

The speaker’s subject position may be unstable but allows him to be aware of his surroundings. It is his Prufrockian temperament which helps him observe the different scenes and apprehend that his life is, in fact, “The burnt-out ends of smoky days” (4). Unable to “spit [the useless remains of life] out” (“Prufrock” 60), he clings, looking for “The notion of some infinitely gentle / Infinitely suffering thing” (“Preludes” 50-51). Whether he wants to find something “gentle” or “suffering,” the world around him is not passive; rather, it displays signs of action which appears through his surroundings:

The showers *beat*

On broken blinds and chimney-pots,

And at the corner of the street

A lonely cab-horse steams and *stamps*. (9-12; emphasis added)

While the speaker does not do or say anything, his surroundings,

whether it is the weather or an animal, commit to an activity, despite the violent undertones. For example, in "Morning at the Window," the "brown waves of fog" (5) seem to do more than the passive speaker:

The brown waves of fog toss up to me
Twisted faces from the bottom of the street,
And *tear* from a passer-by with muddy skirts
An aimless smile that hovers in the air
And vanishes along the level of the roofs. (5-9; emphasis added)

The fog in "Prufrock" is compared to a playful cat which slowly "slides along the street" (24) and eventually transforms into dangerous waves which "tear" a smile from a passer-by's face in "Morning." Through this depiction, the reader senses his loss of agency when the brown fog splits the smile from the human body and isolates it from its agent. It only becomes "aimless" when the fog takes a human action away from its agent and eventually cause it to disappear. The only action human beings can perform in turn is to walk on the street, as seen in "the trampled edges of the street" (2).

The street is directly exposed to the "violence" of the feet, when it is "sawdust-trampled" ("Preludes" 17) and "trampled by insistent feet" (41). There is a complicated relationship between the "feet" and the "street," which emphasizes the way the human consciousness functions, if at all. The first appearance of feet occurs in Section I:

And now a gusty shower wraps

The grimy scraps

Of withered leaves about your feet

And newspapers from vacant lots. . . . (5-8)

It is the “gusty shower” who “wraps” the “grimy scraps” like wrapping paper around the feet. The feet, an integral part of the body to help it move, do nothing in that moment, and when they eventually do, it is to “press / To early coffee-stands” (17-18) with an automatic movement. The “insistent feet / At four and five and six o’clock” (41-42) also move automatically, as if time designates the destination for the people who moves accordingly. In other words, the “feet,” an integral part of the human body, lack humanlike qualities when their movement based on time is machinelike and mechanical. It captures how the human subjects lose agency especially when only the feet’s mechanical movement eliminates the possibility of human control.

As Mayer observes, “nothing humanely whole exists among the clutter of objects; people are merely ‘feet,’ reduced to the body part that connects them to the ‘streets,’ a human invention that associates them with technology and the plan of the city, the ideal order that the streets both symbolize and contradict” (88). The feet connect the people to the “streets,” which despite being “a human invention,” seem to have more ambition than its creators:

And short square fingers stuffing pipes,

And evening newspapers, and eyes
Assured of certain certainties,
The conscience of a blackened street
Impatient to assume the world. (43-47)

“A blackened street / Impatient to assume the world” (46-47) has more humanlike aspects, such as a “conscience” (46), than the mechanical feet that trample on it. The irony, however, is that there is no possibility that the street can “assume the world,” especially since in Section II the speaker observes that “You had such a vision of the street / As the street hardly understands” (33-34). Although the street may have a “conscience,” it cannot “understand” or plan anything, especially since it cannot move. Only human agents may “assume” anything, but with their lack of subjectivity, demonstrated by their fragmentation, the street functions as their replacement.

The street may scheme to take over the world, or worlds, which “revolve like ancient women / Gathering fuel in vacant lots” (53-54) in a helpless circle, such as the cycle in “Rhapsody.” However, their scheme and eventual failure only highlight the destitution or “the meaninglessness of the universe, no living entity proceeding by instinct toward an appointed goal but a worn-out mechanism with parts stiffly toiling as, without destination, it moves in endless epicyclic paths” (Smith 23). The way the poem starts with the “evening” (1) and moves onto the “morning” (14) only to return back

unto the evening, where "His soul stretched tight across the skies" (39) reminds the readers of the "etherised patient" in "Prufrock" and emphasizes the meaningless passage of time since the people are only fragments of a body, without any subjectivity or control over their movements. A similar portrayal occurs in "The Boston Evening Transcript" where its readers "Sway in the wind like a field of ripe corn" (1-2) moving in a tired uniform way as if waiting for a harvest. While the speaker mentions a specific group of people for his satire, the lack of control over one's movement is highlighted in the passage. Mirroring the feet which move "without destination," the readers sway together without any sense of direction or ambition.

The "feet" are not the only example of the "parts stiffly toiling," since the other body parts exhibit the same mechanical movement. As Smith analyzes, Eliot practices "depersonalizing character by talking about bodily members" (21). The "bodily members" do not have any character, only functioning as if they are part of "a worn-out mechanism" (Smith 23). Their movements are not only automatic but the same:

One thinks of all the hands
That are raising dingy shades
In a thousand furnished rooms. (21-23)

Also an important part of the human body, the hands follow the same manner as the "feet" which head to the "coffee-stands," since they

move without ambition. The “short square fingers stuffing pipes” (43) do not actually achieve anything more than produce “the burnt-out ends of smoky days” (4). This bleakness is also demonstrated in Section III where a certain woman’s night and day are depicted.

The woman does not leave the bed, as she “waited” (25), just like the “human engine waits” (216) in *The Waste Land*. In a manner similar to Prufrock, she seems to see the fragments of her consciousness apart from her body, as if they are played “in patterns on a screen” (“Prufrock” 105):

You dozed, and watched the night revealing
The thousand sordid images
Of which your soul was constituted;
They flickered against the ceiling. (26-29)

By claiming that the “soul was constituted” of the thousands sordid images, the speaker confirms the fact that the soul is not one unity but made up of fragments. She does not do anything but watch throughout the night until the morning. Unlike Prufrock, however, she does not seem to be cautious while watching her soul “against the ceiling.” Smith believes that the woman “starts her own return to consciousness for resumption of life’s masquerade” (22). Mayer also argues that she has a certain awareness which “releases [her] from the blindness of mechanical routinized lives” (90). However, it is not she who returns to the world, but “all the world [which] came back” (30).

Likewise, she does not seem the type who would be able to gain control of her own consciousness. That she does not leave the bed, only “sitting along the bed’s edge” (36), is a significant indicator of her passivity and lack of control over her fragmented soul.

On the bed, she is portrayed “clasp[ing] the yellow soles of feet / In the palms of both soiled hands” (37-38), almost in an animal-like posture. In addition, it is not her “feet” which are “soiled,” like the “muddy feet” outdoors, but her hands. While reflecting her desolation, the posture is a sign of resignation from action. In “Morning,” the speaker is “Aware of the damp souls of housemaids / Sprouting despondently at area gates” (3-4). In both cases, the speaker captures the despondency of the “souls” of women whose “fancies that are curled / Around these images” (“Preludes” 48-49) he “cling[s]” (49). However, as mentioned before, the girl’s cycle of the night and day in bed compares to the hopeless cycle that the “ancient women” wander around in. The desolate “world” or other nonhuman agents have more control over the situation than the human agents experiencing loss of humanity and subjectivity.

Anthony Cuda explores a character’s despondency and its source:

It is the nature of the patient to suffer movement inflicted on it by an agent, but this movement need not always induce fear. . . . The emotional turbulence that

Eliot's personae experience—their oscillation between relief and terror—arises not necessarily from the nature of the action that patient suffers but from the vulnerability and helplessness that he endures. (398)

The despondency arises from the fear that the character, or “patient,” experiences when it “suffer[s] movement inflicted on it by an agent.” As observed in Chapter 1, the “vulnerability and helplessness” the Prufrockian speaker experiences also apply to the speakers whose subject position are given to surrounding nonhuman agents. Like the speakers that find difficulty in front of imagined or actual company, especially female, the speakers who wander in the city unaccompanied and isolated do not succeed in utterance. Their sensitivity also causes them to find difficulty uniting their observations, mostly directed by the nonhuman agents.

Cuda adds, “The temporary loss of control over the will (such as occurs during etherized paralysis) . . . only reveals the extent to which the conscious mind is never the ‘centre’ of its own will nor entirely in control of its own movements” (410). Paralleling Prufrock, the speakers in “Preludes,” “Morning” and “Rhapsody” all experience difficulty in establishing their subject position. With fragmented and limited utterance, they eventually direct their attention on nonhuman objects that have more control over the speakers’ movements, and choose instead to remain passive. As a result, the nonhuman agents

substitute for the passive and fragmented speaker thereby replacing his voice and action with their own.

3. The Satires

Whether he is in the company of people or at a place surrounded by objects, the speaker in the majority of the poems cannot and does not communicate to anyone. He does speak in several situations, but his words as well as thoughts are not actually delivered to the listener. In both public and private spheres, he finds silence and distance between himself and his surroundings. The speaker loses his ability to speak, especially when his consciousness wavers with the anxiety about the woman, imagined or real. In other cases, the nonhuman agents replace the speaker's voice, especially when he cannot find the words to explain the desolate world around him. In both situations, the speaker's perceptive sensitivity captures the fragmented observations and recollections in his poem. While the poems do not have a clear narrative, they reflect the emotions the speaker projects onto his observations. On the other hand, Eliot's satires in *Prufrock* do more than capture observations. In each of these poems, the speaker carefully discloses certain information about the characters he delineates while maintaining emotional distance.

In particular, the Boston poems, comprising of "The Boston Evening Transcript," "Aunt Helen," and "Cousin Nancy," are examples of a speaker that contrasts with the Prufrockian speaker in Chapters 1 and 2. In the respective order of the poems mentioned above, the speaker gradually substitutes his subject position as "a

personal voice" to a "generalized authorial voice" (Mayer 167) focusing on the description of the character, especially in "Cousin Nancy" where he directs his attention on "Miss Nancy Ellicott" (1) without emphasizing his relationship to her as suggested in the title. As the speaker distances himself from the characters, he becomes less sensitive towards the characters and portrays them in a satirical light. Although he aims to be neutral in his characterizations, several details in his descriptions, such as the poetic syntax and images, reflect his critical attitude towards the characters. Compared with the Prufrockian speaker who is more attentive to his anxiety and struggles in his utterance, the satirical speaker succeeds in conveying his position towards the characters without digressing or concentrating on his own situation. In other words, he makes his point about certain characters without failure of utterance.

The shift from the Prufrockian speaker to a satirical one may have been influenced by Eliot's relationship with Ezra Pound. According to Mayer, Pound's Imagist influence on Eliot may be the reason why "the new Boston poems contain some psychic and evocative images typical of the early style but resemble Imagist poems (whose point is to be inferred from precisely detailed objects) by relying mainly on enumerations of flat, apparently objective details whose satiric point has to be inferred, rather than details that cue the satire" (163-64). The "new descriptive format" (164) uncovers not only

the objective details about the character, such as Cousin Harriet, Aunt Helen, or Cousin Nancy, but uncovers the various implications the “impersonal” speaker raises in the poems. Although the “order of their composition is unknown” (164), the poems’ order in the volume serves as a cursor to the change in the speaker’s subject position.

Starting with “The Boston Evening Transcript,” the speaker focuses on the popular newspaper which, according to Craig Raine, is modeled on “[Matthew] Arnold’s bathetic deployment in *Culture and Anarchy of the Daily Telegraph*” (53).¹² Like Arnold who criticizes how the *Daily Telegraph* becomes the “word” and the “voice” of its readers, Eliot utilizes the newspaper, known “for catering to Boston’s elite” (Reilly), to criticize its readers. Founded in 1830, the *Boston Evening Transcript* would go on “to publish a regular genealogy column, the lengthy speech Daniel Webster gave as principal counsel in an infamously divisive murder trial, a detailed account of the funeral of King George IV, and local crime reports” and “persisted for 111 years” (Reilly). The speaker’s weariness, demonstrated in his goodbye to “La Rochefoucauld” (7), conveys a sense of disapproval with the current paper. Eliot later wrote about La Rochefoucauld in 1919: “Rochefo[u]cauld ‘is hard...but there is not in him even the germ of

¹² Craig Raine posits that Eliot’s reference to the *Boston Evening Transcript* is based on Arnold’s ironical description about the *Daily Telegraph*, which he quotes, “The word, again, which we children of God speak, the voice which most hits our collective thought, the newspaper with the largest circulation in England, nay, with the largest circulation in the whole world, is the *Daily Telegraph!*” (53-54). Likewise, Eliot seems to criticize the newspaper that many Bostonians turned to and depended on for their “collective thought.”

cynicism: he is an implacable moralist...he persists in measuring men by an invisible standard, fundamentally a Christian standard” (Moody 57). Raine’s comparison between Arnold’s *The Daily Telegraph* and Eliot’s *The Boston Evening Transcript* is significant, especially since Arnold criticizes the replacement of Christian standards with the words of the British newspaper.¹³ The speaker’s “nod good-bye” (7) to a French author of the 17th century and a moralist with a “Christian standard” before handing over the newspaper to his cousin implies that the past ideals no longer is effective; instead, the popular newspaper replaces these values, shaping the majority of the people’s beliefs and standards.

The speaker also suggests that the Boston paper leads its readers to move in a certain way, just as the “field of corn” would “sway in [the direction of] the wind” (2). The way the speaker portrays their movement echoes Prufrock’s observations of the movement of the women: “In the room the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo” (13-14). Here, Prufrock focuses on the women who aimlessly move back and forth only to talk about Michelangelo. The repetition of the couplet (13-14) implies that Michelangelo affects not only their conversation but their thoughts as well. Not included in

¹³ Raine’s reference to *Culture and Anarchy* is significant, especially since Arnold condemns how the “children of God” fail to live in “the idea of perfection” (Arnold 59). The reference to London “with its unutterable external hideousness, and with its internal canker of *publice egestas, privatim opulentia*, --to use the words which Sallust puts into Cato’s mouth about Rome, --unequaled in the world” (59; emphasis original) comes just prior to his mention of the *Daily Transcript*.

their conversation, the speaker observes how the artist is reduced to a mere topic for the women to discuss to maintain their veneer of culture. Likewise, the speaker in "The Boston Evening Transcript" reflects in the first two lines how the newspaper has an effect on its readers. While the two lines do not rhyme as in Prufrock's couplet about the women, the "clunky" (Raine 53) name of the newspaper sticks out like the word, "Michelangelo," in the earlier poem. In fact, the newspaper is emphasized thrice in the poem, its name at the end of the first, the fifth, and the last line. Contrasting to the women poems and the city poems in *Prufrock and Other Observations*, it is the first poem where the title appears in the actual verses. While the speaker satirizes the readers of the paper more so than the actual newspaper, the upfront title eliminates all signs of emotional attachment. The repetition of the title of the newspaper at the beginning, middle, and end of the poem only stresses its spreading influence not only on its readers but on the speaker as well.

Within the first two lines, the speaker acts as an observer, distinct and distant from the readers of the paper. However, in the next stanza, he suddenly makes an appearance as one who "mount[s] the steps and ring[s] the bell, turning / Wearily" (6-7) to hand over the newspaper to his cousin. Unlike Prufrock, the speaker does not wonder what to say or think whether it would "have been worth it" (87) to say, but ends the poem with the words: "'Cousin Harriet, here

is the *Boston Evening Transcript*” (9). The words may seem trivial as he announces the reason for his arrival, but its significance lies in the fact that the speaker succeeds in its utterance. That the speaker does not have the Prufrockian temperament is clear, since he does not “turn back and descend the stair” (39) but continues on without any hesitation. He may do so “wearily” (6), but it does not unease or vex him.

Furthermore, the speaker does not stop “bringing the Boston Evening Transcript” (5) to his cousin, despite its replacement of Christian moral standards. He simply considers “[that] the street were time and [La Rochefoucauld] at the end of the street” (8), and contributes to its widening distance by delivering the paper. Hence, he cannot be much different from the readers of the newspaper, since he moves in a habitual manner to provide the paper for his cousin. Although the speaker wants to distinguish himself from the “field of ripe corn,” what he says at the end of the poem makes him part of the uniform and most importantly, lifeless “sway[ing]” (2). Emphasizing “the *Boston Evening Transcript*” (9), the speaker ends the poem with an implication that like the members of the Boston elite, he will eventually give in to the contemporary ideas and beliefs the popular newspaper enforces.

The similarity between the speaker and his object of satire also appears in “Aunt Helen” despite the emotional distance the speaker

maintains throughout the poem. With the exception of the title and the first line, the speaker leaves out any indicators of their familial ties. Distinct from the “The Boston Evening Transcript,” the title, “Aunt Helen,” addresses a person; however, there is a similarity in the manner that both speakers address the people associated with the title more than the actual character. Rather than describe Aunt Helen as a person, the speaker highlights her death and its effect on the people and objects around her. However, just as he provides a glimpse of his emotional distance through his observations, the details about her death offers a look into her somber and mundane life.

The speaker’s familial relationship with his aunt strengthens his reliability, especially since he can offer details that may otherwise be unknown to other people. At the same time, he attempts to remain neutral and does not portray her in a sympathetic light despite his family ties. Obviously, the speaker does not approve of her through his objective details that are carefully formulated:

Miss Helen Slingsby was my maiden aunt,
And lived in a small house near a fashionable square
Cared for by servants to the number of four. (1-3)

The first line is a key example of the speaker’s “objectivity,” especially when he highlights her unmarried status twice through the words “Miss” and “maiden.” While the details about her single life are necessary to depict her accurately, the emphasis on her unwed status

illustrates her as a spinster whose strict ideals contribute to her loneliness; the only people who actually cared for her are her servants, and it is possible that it was only out of duty. The poetic syntax of the second and third lines seems to emulate the way Aunt Helen might have spoken to another person about her possessions. The speaker inserts the detail “near a fashionable square” (2) to highlight her concerns to be near what was “fashionable” and standard in society. In addition, Raine observes how “Its prim, even archaic tone—‘Cared for by servants to the number of four’—is at odds with the anarchic elements of misrule” (55). The speaker borrows the “archaic tone” that his aunt might have used and instead of saying, “Cared for by four servants,” he utilizes “servants to the number of four” to overstate the number of servants. Within three lines, the speaker begins his critical observation of “Miss Helen Slingsby,” and with the fourth, “Now when she died,” his concentration on her death rather than her life unveils his distant manner towards his own aunt.

The speaker’s attention to the details about her death puts more emphasis on the objects and people that she must have held dearer than the character herself. In addition, he does not seem to be emotionally attached to his aunt whose “dogs were handsomely provided for” (8). The dogs and the “parrot” (9) which died after its owner’s death bear witness to his aunt’s detachment with people, which explains why the speaker brings to light how “there was silence

in heaven / And silence at *her end* of the street" (4-5; emphasis added). The reference to the seventh seal in Revelations 8 is extremely coy, since the speaker suggests two contrasting ideas: "silence in heaven as a mark of universal respect and silence in heaven as a mark of theological indifference" (Raine 56). The speaker uses the two details, her isolation from people and her attachment to material objects, to paint a caricature of a woman whose death is more interesting than her life.

What is not said stands out more than what is, especially with the detail of the "undertaker [who] wiped his feet— / [...] aware that this sort of thing had occurred before" (6-7). It is not clear whether the undertaker's wiping of feet occurs before or after leaving the house, but the undertaker's awareness of "this sort of thing" should have come after his visit. The speaker suggests that the undertaker wipes his feet as he exits the house, indicating the filth or dirt within. In addition, for an undertaker, a person who regularly prepares the dead for burial, death cannot be described as "this sort of thing." Instead, the speaker's observation implicates a sinister happening which is concealed when the "shutters were drawn" (6). By wiping of feet, an action that slightly mimics Pontius Pilate's washing of hands,¹⁴ the

¹⁴ The Bible records how Pontius Pilate washed his hands when he wanted to get rid of the responsibility of Jesus' death (*New International Version*, Matt. 27:24). By wiping his feet, the undertaker gets rid of any remaining dust or dirt from Aunt Helen's house, refusing to take any remnants of the house with him. In this action, he shrugs away the gloom behind death, treating the matter as if it is a common occurrence by saying it "had occurred before" (7).

undertaker cleanses himself from what incident the speaker does not disclose in the poem, and leaves with the conclusion that this “had occurred before.” The speaker shares the matter-of-factness of the undertaker by leaving out any details about the cause of her death, which remains unclear.

On the other hand, what she leaves behind is magnified to great intensity. Although the parrot “died too” (9), indifferent Time, as well as the heavens, is nonresponsive to her death. The last four lines paint a picture of home where the people are unaffected about Aunt Helen’s death:

The Dresden clock continued ticking on the mantelpiece,
And the footman sat upon the dining-table
Holding the second housemaid on his knees—
Who had always been so careful while her mistress
lived. (10-13)

Even without Aunt Helen, the Dresden clock, a symbol of affluence and possibly one of her prized possessions, ticks on, emphasizing Time’s longevity and indestructability. In addition, the sexual relationship between the footman and the second housemaid highlights the lack of lamentation amongst the servants. The speaker’s knowledge of their activity, even past interactions when the housemaid had “been so careful,” unveils his familiarity with the affairs of the house that he chooses not to disclose. Nevertheless, the

reason why he ends the poem with the image of the couple may be correlated with the beginning of the poem, where he emphasizes her “maiden” status. By engaging in “shocking reversals of the behavior Miss Helen had required” (Mayer 168), the servants unveil what Aunt Helen did not actually possess: an intimate connection with another person. Throughout the poem, the speaker emphasizes her emptiness with what she had; her servants, pets, and clock reminding her of time past only accentuate her loneliness and isolation.

While the speaker in “The Boston Evening Transcript” associates with “Cousin Harriet” (9) by delivering the paper directly at the end of the poem, the remote speaker in “Aunt Helen” ends the poem without any details about his personal connection to his aunt. Furthermore, he commemorates her only through the title, and only utilizes her death to point out certain aspects about her life. The poem is a kind of elegy, although absent of the “conventional sentiment” (Raine 56). According to Mayer, “the observer submerges his personal relationship to his subject in order to turn her into a satiric object, the symbol of a world to be derided” (167). Without any sympathy or sensitivity towards her, the speaker treats her as a “satiric object,” just as the speaker in “The Boston Evening Transcript” satirizes the newspaper and its readers. Despite being critical of her, he recognizes that “Miss Helen could never depart from the conduct expected of her, enclosed in her ‘small’ house by a way of life as mechanical as the

ticking clock on the mantelpiece" (Mayer 168). The prim "conduct" she upheld produces a barren and uninfluential life which differs from the free and indiscreet ways of the servants. By ending the poem with an indirect reference to his aunt's death, the speaker mourns not for his lost aunt but for the loss of past ideals and standards which the speaker in "The Boston Evening Transcript" also conveys.

In the same manner, the last of the three poems, "Cousin Nancy," follows the pattern of a distant speaker who portrays his relatives in a critical manner, with the exception of one fundamental difference. While the speaker describes his relatives in the first-person for the first two poems, utilizing "I" twice in the first poem and "my" in the second, the third poem is told in the third-person, with only the title as a sign of the speaker's relations. Because of the word "cousin" in the title, the reader understands that the speaker, using the "general authorial voice" (Mayer 169), is reliable in his observations. In the same manner as the two previous poems, the speaker treats the subject as a "satiric object." As the speaker makes his presence less apparent, he spends more time describing his relative. In the first poem, he refers to his relative only at the last line, and in the second poem the speaker only addresses the events after Aunt Helen's death. In "Cousin Nancy," however, the speaker concentrates solely on the titular heroine's actions:

Miss Nancy Ellicott

Strode across the hills and broke them,
Rode across the hills and broke them—
The barren New England hills—
Riding to hounds
Over the cow-pasture. (1-6)

Divided into three verse paragraphs, the poem introduces the character through her powerful actions: hunting on horse-back. The first verse paragraph echoes the speaker's manner in "Aunt Helen," but then he removes all association to "Miss Nancy Ellicott," addressing her in the first line with her name in a formal manner. Unlike the speaker in "Aunt Helen," the speaker describes a specific moment that emphasizes her free nature and her ability to defy what is expected of her. Cousin Nancy does not try to "conduct" herself in a stiff and refined way like Aunt Helen. In fact, she is the opposite, choosing to roam around the outdoors rather than confine herself within "a small house" (2).

Placed side by side, Aunt Helen and Cousin Nancy are completely different characters, one who has died a spinster and the other a younger, "modern" (10) woman. In addition, the speakers seem to have a very different agenda, one directing attention on his aunt's surroundings and the other on his cousin's actions. It is also interesting to observe how the two, each thirteen lines in total, have different verse paragraph forms. While "Aunt Helen" has a consistent

perspective where the speaker focuses on the events after her death in one verse paragraph, "Cousin Nancy" is divided into three different verse paragraphs where the speaker's shifts between perspectives are more evident. Despite the various differences between the two works, both speakers satirize the two women whose isolation from others unites them together. More mindful of the women's characteristics than the actual women, the speakers focus on the isolated women whose lives reflect the external changes affecting the New England society.

In the first verse paragraph of "Cousin Nancy," the speaker describes a woman who would not realize her own isolation conveyed in the poem. She is in her own world, where she does not realize or care that there is no game for her to hunt in a farmland. In addition, she has no human companion while riding. Similar to Aunt Helen and her dogs, Cousin Nancy surrounds herself with "hounds" (5), her only company. As Mayer observes, "Thus in describing her striding across the New England hills to break them, skillful repetitions of phrase ('across the ... hills,' 'and broke them') and of long vowels ('strode,' 'broke,' 'rode') build her power in order to set her up for a fall, first indicated when the obstacles she 'broke' are said to be 'barren' and then executed when the site where she rode to hounds is revealed to be a cow pasture" (169). Without an explanation of the reason why she is "riding to hounds" (5), the speaker uses repetitions of words to

multiply the futility of her actions. She may break the “New England hills” (4) she is trampling on, but they are “barren,” already broken. Through this detail, the speaker demonstrates the environment Miss Nancy Ellicott is surrounded in; despite her wish to pursue or achieve something greater, she is limited to “the cow-pasture” (6) where she cannot hunt and wanders around without direction or purpose.

With this strong impression, the speaker continues on to the second verse paragraph, where he adds another interesting detail about his cousin: “Miss Nancy Ellicott smoked / And danced all the modern dances. . . .” (7-8). The repetition of her first and last names as well as the use of the honorific title “Miss” stresses the speaker’s distance from his cousin. While smoking was common among women at the time in England, the other *Prufrock* poems before “Cousin Nancy” approach it as a male-centered activity. In particular, the speaker in “Portrait of a Lady” leaves the presence of the elderly woman at her home, and “regains composure in the ‘public’ city in which he is comfortable in the role of the casual male-about-town (‘Let us take the air’) who dulls awareness in a ‘tobacco trance’ and escapes female emotional demands through the routines of male camaraderie (‘drink our bocks’)” (Mayer 112-13). If smoking for women was frowned upon in New England, it would simply make sense why “her aunts were not quite sure how they felt about it” (9). Lyndall Gordon analyzes that “[i]t is not a passionate Puritan rebellion but a thinner

kind, involving arid acts of will, smoking, drinking, riding the New England hills until she 'broke them'" (17-18). The speaker takes note of the way the aunts disapprove Cousin Nancy's "modern" (10) acts of "rebellion" and makes no comment on the matter. Like the speaker in "Aunt Helen," the lack of commentary on her actions is crucial for his "objectivity." However, his silence on the matter also hints towards a disapproval not only of the "modern" lady but her aunts as well.

Similar to the reference to the "Dresden clock" (10) in the former poem, the speaker ends "Cousin Nancy" with a focus on the books:

Upon the glazen shelves kept watch
Matthew and Waldo, guardians of the faith,
The army of unalterable law. (11-13)

Without identifying whether the books belong to either the aunts or Cousin Nancy, the speaker combines two different "intellectual guardians of Victorian culture" (Bush 24), Matthew Arnold and Ralph Waldo Emerson, into one. As Jewel Spears Brooker notes, "the effect is to underscore the fragility and pathetic decadence of Arnold and Emerson, for him the symbol of Boston's two great religions: Culture and Unitarianism" (*Mastery* 226). Uniting Emerson, an influential figure in Boston for Unitarianism, and Arnold, a key figure of Victorian criticism and advocate of culture in the place of religion (Brooker, "Substitutes" 17), the speaker acknowledges that they are

“guardians of the faith.” Claiming that they are “the army of unalterable law,” the speaker combines a line from Meredith’s “Lucifer in Starlight,” a Victorian poem, into his “modern” work (Litz 139). However, the speaker raises the question whether “unalterable law” actually is constant in a “modern” world.

Ending with an allusion to another poem that ends with the same line, the speaker juxtaposes Lucifer with Cousin Nancy as she represents the one that leads the rebellion against the “unalterable law.” Therefore, the speaker’s details about his cousin’s activities aim to expose the key acts of rebellion: hunting on “barren” land with no game. The speaker does not condemn Cousin Nancy for rebelling, but only reflects that there is nothing to replace the already “dead” ideals that she breaks. In other words, the speaker suggests that there is nothing in “New England” where she may be able to find meaning.

Similar to the allusion to “La Rochefoucauld” in the first Boston poem, the focus on “the received wisdom of Georgian England and Wilsonian America” (Mayer 169) only underscores old tradition. Aunt Helen and her proper ways, possibly from Victorian traditions and values, have failed to influence others, and the *Boston Evening Transcript* replaces the morals of past authors, such as “La Rochefoucauld.” In the last of the three poems, the aunts cannot change Cousin Nancy from her “modern” ways. Despite this, the speaker’s signal towards “the glazen shelves” where the two authors

“kept watch” (11) suggests that these values are still present. Even with little influence over the modern generation, the past traditions still direct the attitudes of the older generation, which cause the aunts to disapprove of Cousin Nancy’s behavior. To the aunts, who may agree with Aunt Helen and her values, the two authors are “guardians of the faith” (12) as the providers of propriety.

In the three Boston poems, the personal and emotional distance between the speaker and his objects of satire widens. For instance, the speaker’s role in “Cousin Nancy” is primarily to describe her actions. His use of the breaks in verse-paragraphs reinforces his perspectives: in “The Boston Evening Transcript,” the speaker begins the poem with two verses whose image lingers on until the next stanza, intensifying the criticism of the newspaper; in “Aunt Helen,” combining different events, such as the undertaker’s examination and the servants’ indifferent reaction to her death strengthens the speaker’s characterization of his aunt whose death captures an important aspect of her life; and in “Cousin Nancy,” the last verse paragraph becomes the key to understanding Cousin Nancy’s actions and her aunts’ disapproval. These perspectives reveal things not only about the character, but about the New England society they live in. The speaker shifts from the first-person to the third-person voice and therefore maintains emotional distance without a failure of utterance. Whether the speaker approves or disapproves the character is unclear especially

when he alludes to different figures and objects.

The satirical speaker's deliberate choice in conveying specific details about Aunt Helen or Cousin Nancy contrasts with the speakers in the women poems in *Prufrock* who experience trouble communicating their thoughts. More intent on characterizing the women than the emotions concerning them, the satirical speaker produces a more coherent and linear flow in the poem. In the poems, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "Portrait of a Lady," "Conversation Galante," and "Hysteria," the titles reflect certain objects, whether it be a song, portrait, conversation, or a kind of condition. While "La Figlia che Piange" means "young girl weeping," the fact that the title was based on Eliot's visit to "a museum to see a stele called *La Figlia che Piange* (Young Girl Weeping)" (Mayer 131) implies that the title is also about an object. Contrasting to the speakers of "Aunt Helen" and "Cousin Nancy," the speakers in these poems experience difficulty in their utterance; at the same time, they exhibit a sensitivity about the world around them that the speakers in the satires do not possess. In other words, they may not characterize actual people like the satirical speakers, but their sensitivity to the surroundings and people around them captures their humanity.

Perhaps the underlying message that the satirical speakers wish to convey through the poems help them with their utterance; other satires in *Poems 1920* also attest to this pattern, especially when

the speakers comment on the irony of religion in "The Hippopotamus" without any hesitation or difficulty.¹⁵ The satirical speakers' commentary on Boston genteel life through a glimpse of the characters may not be as thoughtful as the speakers experiencing a failure of utterance. The main reason is that the satirical poems do not center around the speakers but the characters. In addition to their often critical stance towards the characters, they lack the emotional and self-conscious aspect of the sensitive speakers. Furthermore, it could be said that their description of the female relatives is coherent because of a lack of sexual anxiety which affects the speakers in the women poems. These differences offer an explanation about the failure of utterance that the speakers in the "women" poems encounter when they mix experience with emotions, or "memory with desire" (*The Waste Land* 3).

¹⁵ In poems such as "The Hippopotamus," the speaker aims to find irony in religion, especially when he describes the affairs of the Church. It could be suggested that his utterance eliminates any sensitivity towards any character or events, since he focuses solely on conveying a specific message. The religious satire the speaker wishes to express overshadow any information about the speaker himself.

Conclusion

In his early poetry, Eliot explores the poetic utterance of the speaker, especially when the speaker encounters a problem involving gender and nonhuman agency. When the speaker employs a satirical voice in *Prufrock*, he memorializes family members, but lack the Prufrockian temperament. Eliot's experimentation with satire, presumably with the encouragement of Pound, continues in *Poems 1920*; in a different manner to the Boston satires, he would utilize a uniform form, such as the quatrain stanzas, and explore various topics with more complexity. Despite the significance of his satires, there is a reason why Eliot has received more acclaim and recognition with *The Waste Land*, published in 1922. In the long poem, he returns to the problems explored in his earlier poetry, adding layer upon layer to the point that there is no uniform speaker but many voices.

Despite the complexity of various voices, the speaker's inability to speak in front of a woman continues on in "A Game of Chess," when an unnamed voice, a female character, speaks to a quiet Prufrockian figure who does not respond to her questions:

"My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.

Speak to me. *Why do you never speak?* Speak.

What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?

I never know what you are thinking. Think." (111-114;

emphasis added)

While the woman's voice is in quotations, the speaker does not succeed in speaking, only answering with his thoughts to his companion. In addition, the answer he thinks within his consciousness but does not utter aloud—"I think we are in rats' alley / Where the dead men lost their bones" (115-116)—demonstrates a Prufrockian temperament. Like the speakers facing difficulty with utterance, the speaker in *The Waste Land* is unresponsive to the woman who asks "'Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?'" (126).

Likewise, the problem involving nonhuman agency arises in "The Fire Sermon" in *The Waste Land*:

At the violent hour, when the eyes and back
Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine
waits

Like a taxi throbbing waiting (215-217)

Similar to the mechanical movement of the people described in Chapter 2 of this thesis, the body is described as "the human engine" and "the eyes and back" are merely parts of the engine used for work. In addition, the comparison between the "human engine" and "a taxi throbbing" portrays how the body moves without a sense of possession. Mirroring the taxi, the body moves only wandering as it is commanded by utterance from others. Even if it is "throbbing," it does not have a human heart, as the "engine" becomes the driving force for

the people. In addition, the description of “the evening hour that strives / Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea” (220-221) echoes the previous poems where a certain time orchestrates an involuntary and almost mechanical movement. These similarities between the early poems in *Prufrock* and *The Waste Land* bring to light how the issue of poetic utterance and subjectivity continues to arise.

As a poet who “trained himself and modernized himself on his own” (Pound 80), Eliot distances himself from his Romantic predecessors and focuses on the changes in subjectivity he experiences in a mechanized society. The speaker in the poems concentrates on the fragments of observation, memory, and consciousness within the fast-paced movement of the world and with his careful magnification captures how creating a unified “self” is a questionable and often complex matter. The early poetry brings out “[Eliot’s] preoccupation . . . with the process itself of subjective change” (Schneider 1103) which he connects through religion with its “ritual and dogma” (1113) in his later poetry. His concern with the subject and poetic utterance, however, extends from his earliest poems to his last.

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국문초록

엘리엇의 초기시에 나타난 시적 발화와 주체성

본 논문은 T. S. 엘리엇의 초기시에서 설화자의 시적 발화와 주체성의 관계를 젠더, 비인간 행위자, 그리고 풍자의 문제에 집중해 살펴본다. 특히 엘리엇의 대표적 초기시 「J 알프레드 프루프록의 연가」에서 프루프록의 파편화된 의식과 감수성이 다른 작품 속 설화자들에게도 발견되며 이를 프루프록적 기질이라고 분석한다. 수동적이고 사색적인 설화자는 여성 인물과 소통을 시도하며 내면적 혼란을 경험하고 결국 여성 인물에게 주체자 역할을 맡긴다. “도시 시”의 설화자들도 고립된 상태로 주변을 관찰하며 수동적인 상태를 유지한다. 이들은 비인간 행위자에게 주체성을 맡기고 프로프록적 기질을 나타내는 것이다. 프로프록적 기질을 띠는 설화자와 달리, 풍자적인 설화자들은 인물들과 감정적 거리를 유지함으로써 발화의 문제를 겪지 않는다. 그러나 그들은 주체성을 확립하지 못하며 그림자처럼 인물 묘사 뒤에 숨는다. 결국엔 프루프록적 기질을 가진 설화자들과 발화의 성공을 제외하고는 같은 상황에 머문다. 시적 발화에 성공한 설화자들과 실패한 설화자들 모두 주체성을 여성인물, 비인간 행위자, 또한 풍자의 대상에게 넘긴다. 엘리엇은 초기시에서 시적 발화에 실패하고 주체자 역할을 수행하지 못하는 설화자 모습을 통해서 주체성 확립에 대한 의문을 던진다.

1장은 발화의 대상이 여성인 작품들에서 설화자의 침묵과 불안정한 몸짓이 발화에 미치는 영향을 탐구하며, 2장에서는 비인간 행위자가 설화자 대신에 행동하고 발화에 성공하지만, 주체성을 설립하지 못하는 설화자를 검토한다. 3장에서는 프루프록적 기질을 가진 설화자들은 분열된 의식과 수동적인 상태로 인해 발화에 성공하지 못한

반면 풍자적인 설화자들은 발화에서 문제를 겪지 않는 모습을 살펴본다. 그러나 이들은 주체성을 확립하려는 의지가 없으며 등장인물을 묘사하며 자신을 숨기려고 한다.

주요어: 엘리엇, 프루프록, 설화자, 주체성, 발화, 젠더, 비인간 행위자, 풍자

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