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ELIOT'S PRUFROCK: THE SMALL (UN)BYRONIC (ANTI)HERO

ELİOT'UN PRUFROCK'U: KÜÇÜK (BYRONİK OLMAYAN) (ANTİ)KAHRAMAN

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ABSTRACT

This article establishes a parallel between the character of Manfred and that of Prufrock by drawing upon a select number of broad and generalized characteristics which are considered typical for the Byronic hero. The analysis focuses on a series of segments from Eliot's poem which reveal how Prufrock not only reverberates certain aspects of Manfred's character, but also how he problematizes the Byronic Hero. The article advances the hypothesis that Prufrock never manages to become a true Byronic hero, such as Manfred (despite being driven by such an aspiration), due to the fact that he epitomizes a completely different character type, that of the little man in literature. By highlighting a number of inconsistencies between him and the gloried figures towards whom he aspires, the analysis reveals a radical discrepancy between the reality of Eliot's protagonist and his ambitions. This work highlights the existence of an internal conflict within Prufrock, who is divided into two conflicting sides. The proposition made by this article is that one side of Prufrock functions as something of an echo of the Byronic Manfred, while the other remains directly linked to the modernist reality of the little modernist man.

Keywords: *T.S. Eliot, Byron, Manfred, Prufrock, Romanticism, Poetry, Byronic Hero, Modernism*

ÖZ

Bu makale, Byronic kahramanın tipik özellikleri olarak kabul edilen bir dizi genel ve yaygın özelliği ele alarak Manfred ve Prufrock karakterleri arasında bir paralellik kurmaktadır. Analiz, Eliot'un şiirinden Prufrock'un Manfred'in karakterinin belirli yönlerini yansıtmakla kalmayıp Byronic kahramanı da sorunlu hale getirdiğini ortaya

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koyan bir dizi bölüme odaklanmaktadır. Makale, Prufrock'un (böyle bir arzuyla hareket etmesine rağmen) Manfred gibi gerçek bir Byronic kahraman olmayı asla başaramadığı hipotezini ortaya koymaktadır. Bunun nedeni, Prufrock'un tamamen farklı bir karakter tipini, yani edebiyattaki küçük adamı temsil etmesidir. Analiz, Prufrock ile onun özendiği yüce figürler arasındaki bir dizi tutarsızlığı vurgulayarak, Eliot'un kahramanının gerçekliği ile onun hırsları arasında radikal bir uyumsuzluk olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışma, iki çelişkili tarafa bölünmüş olan Prufrock'un içindeki iç çatışmanın varlığını vurgulamaktadır. Bu makalenin öne sürdüğü tez, Prufrock'un bir tarafının Byronic Manfred'in bir yansıması gibi işlev görürken, diğer tarafının modernist küçük adamın modernist gerçekliğiyle doğrudan bağlantılı kaldığıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *T.S. Eliot, Byron, Manfred, Prufrock, Romantizm, Şiir, Byronic Kahraman, Modernizm*

This study aims to examine the main characteristics of the Byronic hero, as exemplified by Byron's Manfred, in parallel with Eliot's Prufrock. Within the framework of this parallel analysis, this study sheds light on the points of convergence between the two characters, as well as illuminates those instances in which they differ from one another. As the approach which this study utilizes is that of a parallel close reading of both texts, the implemented methodology does not seek to provide a detailed presentation of the historical development and theoretical framework of the Byronic hero in literary scholarship, but endeavors to convey a thorough examination of the ways in which the cardinal traits of this hero-type are integrated and reimagined in a new context and framework by Eliot. Since the historical genesis and subsequent development of the Byronic hero are examined in meticulous detail in Peter Thorslev's comprehensive study, entitled "The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes" (1962), the aim of this article is not to repeat or retell the way in which this hero originated in literature and how he gradually evolved over time, but to draw on a number of his most central characteristics, which are utilized by this study as a framework upon which the parallel analysis could be carried out. Since the elements that comprise this literary hero are so numerous and nuanced, it would not be realistic to contextualize them all in this case study. For the purposes of this analysis, I have therefore focused my attention only on a limited number of traits, which have been considered in their most broad and generalized sense. This broad scope not only affords me greater flexibility when conducting the analysis, but also provides a broader analytical space in which associativity could be rendered in a more adaptable and versatile manner. Although the number of the selected characteristics can be expanded at any time, my ambition here is not to present a comprehensive overview of all the traits of the Byronic hero that can be paralleled with Prufrock, but rather to test my hypothesis that the main qualities of this hero-type are, on the one hand, assimilated by Prufrock, and on the other, problematized by him. With this in mind, let us now turn our attention to the main characteristics of the Byronic hero, as embodied by Manfred, which we will then try to identify in the character of Prufrock.

One of the hallmark characteristics of the Byronic hero, as vividly exemplified by Manfred, is his *alienation and isolation*. From the very onset of his dramatic monologue, he

highlights the fact that he is radically different from the rest of humanity. The only thing that makes him similar to those around him is the fact that he merely: "[bears] / the aspect and the form of breathing men" (Byron, "Manfred") – in other words, he simply has the outward physical appearance of a human. In "Act II, Scene II", however, he stresses the fact that his spirit: "walked not with the souls of men, / nor looked upon the earth with human eyes" (Byron, "Manfred"). This quote emphasizes the idea that although he may physically look like any normal person, his emotional and psychological landscape is far from ordinary. Although he physically wanders among others, no other soul manages to resonate the profound depth of his own and to echo the intensity contained therein. The idea that Manfred is unable to connect with others and to share the vision of others about the world is further elaborated upon in the following passage:

> The thirst of their ambition was not mine,
>
> The aim of their existence was not mine;
>
> My joys—my griefs—my passions—and my powers,
>
> Made me a stranger; though I wore the form,
>
> I had no sympathy with breathing flesh,
>
> Nor midst the Creatures of Clay that girded me (Byron, "Manfred").

This quotation lends further support to the idea that Manfred exists in a realm of his own – completely isolated and alienated from those around him. Not only is he a stranger to the dreams and aspirations of others, but he is also unable to connect with the visions of others about life and human existence. He also conveys the notion that not only are his feelings and emotions radically different from those around him, but the specific manner in which he experiences and engages with sensibility is also utterly unlike his fellow human beings. This simultaneously alienates him from others and renders him unable to experience any worthwhile connection with those around him. He becomes, quite literally, a stranger among his own, yet also quite alien to others. Even when the impending doom of Manfred's earthly existence approaches, he stresses the fact that he will die, as he has lived – alone (see "Scene IV", line 90).

While on a surface level, it may appear that Prufrock is not alone, in reality he is utterly isolated from the world around him. The opening line of the poem – the widely-recognized: "let us go then, *you* and *I*," (Eliot, "Prufrock") – is profoundly deceptive and misleading, as in it Prufrock addresses a secondary presence which is never demystified, nor lifted from obscurity. The line is misrepresentative, as it leads us to believe that there is another individual with whom Prufrock has established communion. This is not, however, the case as Prufrock is "engaged in a dialogue of the mind with the self" (Manganiello, 1989, p. 19). This mental soliloquy gives us a "tour of a symbolic landscape limned in the narrator's mind out of factual observation tinctured with subjective feelings" (Manganiello, 1989, p.

19) which directly complements Manfred's grand and elevated introspective orations. These same lofty meditations provide us with a comparable glimpse within the internal landscape of Manfred's remarkably reflective and contemplative character, as they do so in the case of Prufrock as well. It is precisely through the introspective impetus of these lines that Prufrock's profound sense of isolation and alienation is conveyed and established. Unable to foster any fulfilling and worthwhile connections with those around him, Prufrock, like Manfred, withdraws and seeks refuge in his inner-sanctum, where he becomes consumed by his own introspective contemplations and philosophical meditations. The internalized nature of these musings highlights, both in the case of Manfred and Prufrock, that the sole confidants to both orations are the two characters themselves – they are so far removed from society and so alienated from the people around them that they perform the role of their own prospective listener and target audience. This notion further reinforces Prufrock's profound isolation and alienation; who, like Manfred, functions as his sole, yet most devout and dedicated, listener.

Nonetheless, the sense of isolation and alienation which defines these two characters operates somewhat reciprocally. On the one hand, Manfred and Prufrock are alienated from those around them. On the other hand, however, people are also somewhat alienated from them as well. Take Manfred's encounter with the Chamois Hunter, for example, from "Act I, Scene II" and "Act II, Scene I". Almost immediately after catching sight of him, the hunter realizes that he is "not of my trade" (Byron, "Manfred"). To him, Manfred appears as a madman (see line 100). From the perspective of the hunter, Manfred is not only someone who stands in misalignment with his conventional understanding of one's socially sanctioned status, but also in opposition to his traditional understanding of societal patterns of conduct. Although the hunter can deduce, from the specific manner in which Manfred is dressed, that he is of: "high lineage— / one of the many chiefs, whose castled crags / look o'er the lower valleys" (Byron, "Manfred"), he nonetheless seems completely inaccessible and unreadable to him. From the perspective of the hunter, Manfred is "man of strange words" (Byron, "Manfred"). To put it differently, even though the hunter can easily perceive the fact that Manfred is of noble lineage, he cannot, however, make an adequate assessment related to Manfred's character. To him, Manfred appears as a figure which is utterly beyond the scope and boundaries of his understanding – he is so profoundly other, so alien, and so unfamiliar, that he defies and stands in opposition to everything the hunter finds relatable and familiar. Manfred's complete otherness further solidifies him as a solitary figure which appears incomprehensible and unintelligible to those he encounters.

Like Manfred, Prufrock too appears to be as something of an outsider and as a figure that does not quite fit in with the rest of the people at the gathering (presumably a party of sorts). Although the party appears to be quite lively (insinuated through the refrain of people coming and going) and even though the guests seem to be engaged in energetic conversations (the most notable of which are associated with the Renaissance painter and sculptor – Michelangelo), Prufrock is completely isolated and alienated from those around him. This notion is inferred through the collective image of the women, who function as a symbolic representation for all the members of the party. Not only are these women

distanced and somewhat detached from Prufrock's presence, but they also refrain from seeking interaction with him. This notion draws support from the following quote: "I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each. / I do not think that they will sing to me" (Eliot, "Prufrock"). Based on what is conveyed in this quotation, we can make the proposition that a certain barrier exists between the women and Prufrock, as it does between Manfred and the hunter, which isolates these two characters and renders them completely inaccessible to those around them. Although, Prufrock's discourse does not contain an outside perspective, as that of the Chamois Hunter, through whose point of view we could gain further insight into his character, his discourse nonetheless is characterized by the overarching presence of a hyper-attuned introspective lens, or an intensely-acute inward gaze, through the prism of which we could assess how he imagines he is perceived by others. From Prufrock's perspective, the women at the party attempt to formulate an understanding of him on the basis of his most immediately accessible aspect – his physical appearance. This behavior mirrors that of the Chamois Hunter, who also attempts to decipher Manfred's character on the basis of his physical appearance – the only aspect of his being that seems most approachable and accessible. In Prufrock's mind, the women engage in a similar act of character evaluation. The following quote illustrates this point: "They will say: 'How his hair is growing thin!' / They will say: 'But how his arms and legs are thin!'" (Eliot, "Prufrock"). Since the inner world of both characters is completely inaccessible to those around them, Prufrock is reduced to, as is Manfred, a physical description – all the other vital traits that comprise their characters are so unfamiliar and detached from the ordinary experience of the guests at the party (and respectively from everything the hunter finds familiar) that they appear as figures sealed off from all manner of connection with those around them.

Nonetheless the state of isolation and alienation which defines both characters is, at least to some extent, purposefully imposed. Throughout his discourse, Manfred makes it apparent that his wish is to be alone. This notion is first conveyed during his exchange with the Witch of the Alps (see "Act II, Scene II," line 75) and is subsequently reaffirmed before the spirit which ultimately brings Manfred to the verge of death (see "Act III, Scene IV," line 90). Isolation and alienation are, to some degree, a compromised version of reality which Manfred must endure, at least if he does not want to be equated with the rest of humanity. Seen from another angle, the state of solitude and seclusion which are so profoundly linked to his existence are somewhat necessary in order that he may not be "degraded back to them [referring to humanity]" (Byron, "Manfred") and made "clay again" (Byron, "Manfred"). Similarly, Prufrock also imposes upon himself a comparable form of seclusion from those around him. This idea is prompted by the fact that Prufrock envisions himself as: "scuttling across the floors of silent seas" (Eliot, "Prufrock"). Unable to find any worthwhile companions at the party, or to fit in with the values and beliefs of the society in which he lives, Prufrock, like Manfred, expresses a wish to isolate himself completely from everything and everyone. This form of escapism directly mirrors Manfred's own isolation among the Swiss Alps, where he quite literally wanders along

solitary mountain peaks. Although the place where both characters wish to be left alone varies, the desire is much the same in both characters.

One of the reasons why both Manfred and Prufrock seek seclusion and isolation is due to the incompatibility of their *emotional and intellectual depth* (the second characteristic of the Byronic hero under examination) in relation to not only those around them, but to humanity in its broadest sense. From the very beginning of "Act I, Scene I," Manfred establishes himself as a figure of profound intellect and knowledge. "Philosophy and science (...) / The wisdom of the World, / I have essayed" (Byron, "Manfred"), he declares. He further elaborates on his distinguished intellect and vast depth of knowledge during his exchange with the Witch of the Alps, during which he affirms the following:

In my lone wanderings, to the caves of Death,

Searching its cause in its effect; and drew

From withered bones, and skulls, and heaped up dust

Conclusions most forbidden. Then I passed—

The nights of years in sciences untaught,

[...] I made

Mine eyes familiar with Eternity,

[...] and with my knowledge grew

The thirst of knowledge, and the power and joy

Of this most bright intelligence (Byron, "Manfred).

This quotation highlights the fact that Manfred's thirst for understanding is not just directed towards conventional forms of learning, but towards much more mystical, if not forbidden, forms of knowledge that are beyond the scope of most people. The pursuit of illicit enlightenment positions Manfred on a dramatically different intellectual level from those around him, as he has gained insight that is completely inaccessible to mere mortals. Yet, his pursuit of knowledge is not motivated solely out of some earthly desire for social prestige and authority over his brethren, but is rather spurred from a desire to purely know more – he yearns to expand the horizons of his thought, to push the very boundaries of his understanding, to deepen his awareness of the natural and supernatural, and to gain insight into the mysterious forces that shape the world and govern existence. His reflections, then, are not merely those of someone who daydreams about the metaphysical, but of someone who has seen and experienced it. It is no coincidence, therefore, that his craving for knowledge is defined as a *'thirst'* – in other words, as a desire that can never be quenched and as a longing that can never be truly satisfied. The more Manfred learns and the more he expands the horizon of his understanding, the more his thirst for knowledge becomes

insatiable. On the one hand, this exalts him above all other mortals; on the other hand, however, it also alienates him from them as well.

Similarly, Prufrock too conveys his intellectual prowess. Three times during his discourse he highlights the fact that he possesses knowledge which is, at least in certain unspecified respects, superior to that of those around him. "I have known them all" (Eliot, "Prufrock") he repeats (with some variations in the ensuing wording). Although the quotation is quite vague, at least when considered in relation to Manfred's long introspective musings, it does reveal some intriguing aspects of Prufrock's exceptional mental capacity that could be paralleled with Manfred. The quotation indicates, by means of implication, that Prufrock has not only experienced all that can be afforded to him in terms of social interaction, but has also become desensitized to the environment that surrounds him which he finds far too bland and tedious. For him, this gathering is representative of a setting which has nothing more to offer him than what he has already experienced. From his perspective, the party, as well as the guests in attendance, are profoundly uninteresting and unremarkable – they are unable to stimulate him intellectually, to excite his curiosity in some way, or to arouse his fascination in general. In this respect, his attitude towards them is quite similar to Manfred's own view of the Chamois Hunter and the Abbot, who also fail to motivate even the slightest degree of personal engagement from Manfred's side.

Similar to Manfred, Prufrock has grown weary of established societal expectation and customary roles of conduct reaffirmed by traditional values and beliefs. The fact that he has measured the days that he has spent at such gatherings of social decorum by the number of coffees he has drunk, or the number of cigarettes he has smoked – exemplified in the following two lines: "I have measured out my life with coffee spoons" (Eliot, "Prufrock") and "(...) butt-ends of my days and ways" (Eliot, "Prufrock") – illustrates the extent to which he takes everything that happens around him as something profoundly prosaic and banal, as something that can in no way intrigue his mind or provoke any degree of engagement from his side. Like Manfred, Prufrock is detached and distanced from everyone because he knows them all too well – knows what they think, what they feel, what flat ambitions they have, and what base desires they hold. The people at the party are for Prufrock, as the Chamois Hunter and the Abbot are for Manfred, an open book which he has grown weary of. In this respect, we could argue that both Manfred and Prufrock exhibit a somewhat cynical and disillusioned (possibly even elitist) sense of intellectual condescension towards those around them. Prufrock exhibits this attitude most evidently through the smug and sardonic affirmation of exceptional knowledge related to the dispositions of the guests at the party – a sample size for the entirety of society. Like Manfred, Prufrock is acutely aware of all the constructs that govern people's daily lives – he can see very clearly through the facade of politeness, through the mask of apparent culture and civility (exemplified by the superficial talks of Michelangelo), through the spectacle of life, and glimpse the incredible illusion and emptiness that lies at the heart of it all. It is precisely due to this heightened awareness of existence and deep insight into the forces that govern the world that Manfred, like Prufrock, downplays all interactions with every representative of humanity that crosses his path. This is so, as both characters can

see through people's plain ambitions, through their banal desires, and through their simple notions of life which make them far too dull and trivial for them.

The intellectual prowess which Manfred and Prufrock possess is something of a mixed bag. On the one hand, it elevates both characters above all others they encounter. On the other hand, however, it also distances them from everyone as well. Yet, there is more to this than meets the eye, as this formidable intellectual capacity also instills in them a sense of *pride* (the third aspect of the Byronic hero under examination). One need not look further than "Act I, Scene I" of the dramatic poem to perceive the sense of overwhelming pride which Manfred possesses. When Manfred summons the seven spirits to appear before him and after they inform him that they cannot adequately fulfill his wish of: "Forgetfulness–" (Byron, "Manfred") and of "Oblivion—self-oblivion" (Byron, "Manfred"), he, in a sudden burst of rage, berates them fiercely; as is revealed in the following quotation:

Ye mock me—but the Power which brought ye here

Hath made you mine. Slaves, scoff not at my will!

The Mind—the Spirit—the Promethean spark,

The lightning of my being, is as bright,

Pervading, and far darting as your own,

And shall not yield to yours, though cooped in clay!

Answer, or I will teach you what I am (Byron, "Manfred").

This quotation highlights (in a remarkably expressive manner) the incredible sense of pride which Manfred possesses. One need not delve too deep into the passage to become aware of the profound pride which is infused in his response to the spirits. Traditionally, the spirits ought to be the force to dominate Manfred; yet, here the dynamic has been shifted dramatically. Instead of them imposing their supernatural powers and authority over the mortal Manfred, he imposes his will and authority over them – they become, as he himself calls them, "slaves" (Byron, "Manfred") to his bidding. From Manfred's perspective, he is not only their equal but is, at least to some extent, their better. Despite the fact that he is only a mortal, his intellect and abilities are "far darting" (Byron, "Manfred") than those of the spirits, reaching further and spanning wider than the supernatural plain in which they operate.

"Act II, Scene I" also contains instances in which Manfred reveals his prideful nature. After the Chamois Hunter has rescued Manfred from his attempt to jump off the cliffs and after he has taken him to an undisclosed cottage somewhere in the Alps, he attempts to reason with Manfred and endeavors to find out more about his mysterious nature. As the hunter attempts to talk some sense into his seemly troubled guest, an irritated and flustered Manfred, bursts out and declares the following:

"Preach it to mortals of a dust like thine, —

I am not of thine order" (Byron, "Manfred").

This quotation brings forth an additional aspect of Manfred's pride, namely his prideful attitude towards other people. Not only does he approach the hunter with great disregard for what the hunter has to say, but also towards his concerns for him in general. Although the hunter is genuinely worried about his wellbeing, Manfred completely distances himself from the hunter (one might even say that he cuts him off directly), as he views him as being part of the same human condition which Manfred consciously avoids, so as not to be "degraded back to them, / and [made] all clay again" (Byron, "Manfred"). From Manfred's prideful perspective, he is positioned far above everything and everyone and as a result he wants nothing to do with the rest of humanity (of which the hunter is the most direct and immediate representative) – in fact, he wants to overcome and transcend it completely.

After Manfred storms off from the hunter's cottage and descends towards a lower valley in the Alps (as is indicated by the setting description), he decides, after musing for some time over "a sight of loveliness" (Byron, "Manfred"), to summon "the spirit of this place divine" (Byron, "Manfred"), whom we later learn is the Witch of the Alps. In order to fulfill the boon which Manfred asks of, she requires that he "swear obedience to [her] will, and do / [her] bidding" (Byron, "Manfred"). A furious and enraged Manferd replies the following:

I will not swear—Obey! and whom? the Spirits

Whose presence I command, and be the slave

Of those who served me—Never! (Byron, "Manfred").

The fact that he refuses to submit to the witch shows us how far he is willing to go for his views. Given the fact that the witch can possibly grant him what he desires, his adamant refusal to submit testifies not only to the fact that he exhibits prideful tendencies, but that his pride becomes the fundamental (sole) perspective through which he views the world – it is the foundation of his worldview, his philosophy toward everything and everyone. To submit to someone or yield to the will of another, would mean that he would betray not only himself as a person, but also go against all that he stands for. His pride, then, becomes not only a reaction towards all those he encounters during his wanderings, but as an existential philosophy towards life and all the visible and invisible forces that govern it.

Yet, this is not the last instance in which we can identify Manfred's prideful nature. In "Act III, Scene IV" we again bear witness to an instance in which Manfred clearly exhibits his sense of pride. As Manfred enters the Hall of Arimanes, the infuriated spirits command Manfred to submit before the deity:

Bow down and worship, slave! —What, know'st thou not

Thine and our Sovereign? —Tremble, and obey!

[...]

Prostrate thyself, and thy condemnéd clay,

Child of the Earth! or dread the worst (Byron, "Manfred").

To which Manfred replies: "and yet ye see I kneel not" (Byron, "Manfred"). The intriguing aspect of Manfred's pride is the fact that it is not just directed towards the people he encounters. In other words, his arrogance toward others is not limited to a specific individual, or towards a particular group of people that he happens to meet (be they commoners, priests, servants, etc.); rather, the attitude that he has towards these people is indicative of his general attitude toward humanity as a whole. The intriguing aspect of Manfred's pride, or rather of Manfred's prideful tendencies, is that these very inclinations transcend the confines of humanity and evolve into an attitude towards the supernatural and the divine as well. Let us take the scene with Arimanes for example. Despite the fact that the spirits that are stationed in front of Arimanes' throne attempt to force Manfred to submit and bow down to his power and majesty and despite the fact that they remind him that he is only a mere mortal (in other words, he is inferior to them as well as to the deity), he refuses to submit and to acknowledge the idea that he is lesser. This notion is evidenced by the very fact that he quite deliberately refuses to bow down and kneel before said deity. The very act of resisting subjugation on his side, however, is not due to inherent ignorance, to an inability to grasp the scope of the situation, or to unsound judgment, but to a very conscious and deliberate choice that not only reveals the level and degree of his pride, but also establishes it as a testament to the absolute autonomy of the self. In this sense, Manfred is not just prideful towards the spirits and Arimanes for the sake of merely being prideful, his attitude towards them epitomizes his idea of individual sovereignty which goes against not only all manner and form of subjugation, but also against all structures and hierarchies, regardless if they be: human, supernatural, or divine.

Even his encounter with the Abbot, who attempts to reason with Manfred and bring him on the path towards repentance and salvation, is marked by a deeply conceited reply from his side. Even though the Abbot endeavors to explain that:

I come to save, and not destroy:

I would not pry into thy secret soul;

But if these things be sooth, there still is time

For penitence and pity: reconcile thee

With the true church, and through the church to Heaven (Byron, "Manfred").

To which Manfred proudly responds: "I shall not choose a mortal / to be my mediator" (Byron, Manfred"). Manfred's encounter with the Abbot is somewhat challenging to adequately define, as his refusal to reconcile with the church could be interpreted in two different ways; both of which, however, are indicative of the same sense of pride. On the one hand, it could be argued that Manfred refuses the Abbot's proposal as in his view the Abbot belongs to the same human group that has had and still has a debasing effect over Manfred's own existence. Seeing as though the Abbot is a figure of great authority among the same human group, authority which Manfred does not recognize, he dismisses him out of disdain for the utter hollowness of his self-imagined right and the artificial nature of his earthly beliefs. In other words, *he dismisses him out of disdain for the person himself.* On the other hand, however, it could also be argued that Manfred's disregard for the Abbot is not fueled by a personal rebuff towards the man himself (in fact Manfred goes so far as to praise his pious nature), but rather *for what the man represents and stands for* – mediation between God and the masses. In this sense, by rejecting the Abbot, *he rejects mediation* – the notion that some ordinary mortal, driven by base desires, trivial beliefs, and trifling thoughts could be the middleman between the divine and him, or between him and the divine. In Manfred's view, the individual and sovereign self-constitutes its own indivisible bond with the Divine – no mortal can perform this role for another person, as each mortal is inherently flawed and lacking worthwhile meaning. This could be one plausible reason for Manfred's dismissal of the Abbot; the other could pertain to Manfred's unwillingness to be dependent on anything or anyone. If, hypothetically, Manfred was inclined to accept the Abbot's advice for repentance, then, he would immediately become dependent on the Abbot's intercession and, more importantly, of the system and hierarchy of belief that he represents. By repenting, he is not only admitting guilt before the Abbot, but before God. This act makes him an immediate participant in a spiritual framework which will necessitate a surrender of his individual sovereignty to a higher sovereign. What is more, repentance also makes him dependent on a doctrine of reward and punishment which is not the product and design of his own autonomous self (his conscious mind); but rather of some other outside power which holds no dominion over him. As this structure of belief and of worship, as well as all its other interrelated doctrines of reward and punishment, damnation and salvation, virtuousness and sinfulness, has as its sovereign an outside authority, which is inconsequential for Manfred, he rejects the notion that such a system and such a sovereign could exert control over him, as he himself is his own sovereign and his own self-sufficient source of authority. McVeigh's research confirms this line of thinking by indicating that: "neither an atheist nor a revolutionary, [Manfred] is yet defiant of powers and structures outside of himself, including the demands of such systems as pantheism, Manicheanism, and Christianity" (McVeigh, 1982, p. 603). It seems that his pride in his own autonomous self will simply not allow him to accept any outside influence or dependency. His reluctance to accept the Abbot's pleas, as well as to be positioned within a system of dependencies, is again a well-thought-out decision that he quite consciously makes. Manfred's pride, then, is not simply some selfish reaction towards everyone and

everything that crosses his path, but rather as an embodiment, albeit a radical one, of the absolute autonomy of the self, as well as of its total freedom. This kind of pride, however, as well as this kind of freedom, does not come without its price. Tragic loneliness, as well as crushing isolation, is the toll which Manfred has to endure for his pride-driven vision of absolute freedom.

Prufrock's sense of pride can be discerned in some of the lines which we have already considered in a previous segment of this analysis; namely, those in which Prufrock muses over his profound insight and knowledge about those around him. The lines in question are the following (abbreviated):

For I have known them all already, known them all:

(...)

I know the voices dying with a dying fall

(...)

And I have known the eyes already, known them all—

(...)

And I have known the arms already, known them all— (Eliot, “Prufrock”).

These quotes highlight a rather intriguing aspect of Prufrock's character, namely his sense of prideful superiority towards others. Like Manfred, who, during his encounter with the Chamois Hunter, proudly declares that he is not like him, from Prufrock’s diction we can also perceive a prideful distance between him and the people around him. His mode of expression highlights the fact that Prufrock distances himself from those around him (in a manner similar to Manfred), as he is too aware (far too aware even) of the true nature of humanity which is far too trivial, simple, and ordinary for him. He is well aware of other people’s superficial conversations (i.e., the familiar voices) that are devoid of any depth and real meaning and of their hypocritical and judgmental looks (i.e., the recognizable eyes) that reduce a person's essence to the way they look (i.e., the emphasis on the arms). He, like Manfred, is distanced from everyone because he can see very clearly past the veil of this social spectacle and perceive the incredible emptiness that lingers behind every social interaction and convention. Like Manfred, Prufrock no longer conforms to the various social constructs that dominate people's everyday lives, as he regards all the rules and conventions within that structure as meaningless. In this sense, Prufrock remains prideful in his withdrawal from society, as he has completely transcended it intellectually. He deems the entire social system (represented by the party in question) to be devoid of any worthwhile meaning, as it does not align with his intellectual aptitude and, more importantly, is not the product of his own rationality and logic. Prufrock, much like Manfred, simply happens to be born into this system to which he is nothing more than a

passive onlooker. In this sense, Prufrock, like Manfred, confines himself to the role of the observer, as he refuses to be assimilated into its hollow structure which he deems as lacking all existential significance and spiritual worth. As a result, both characters consider all the people they encounter (be they the guests at the party, or the people that cross Manfred's path) as inferior (or lesser), as their desires, dreams, and ambitions seem far too trivial and unsubstantial, when compared to the ambitions goals and elevated aspiration which both Prufrock and Manfred have.

On the one hand, the sense of pride which the two characters possess might be attributed to their formidable intellect, which elevates them above the others, as we have previously explained. On the other hand, however, their pride could also stem from their *authority or power*, which allows them to stand apart from the rest. This is precisely the next characteristic of the Byronic hero which we shall attempt parallel to Eliot's Prufrock. Manfred's immense power and authority over the inhabitants of the natural world, as well as over the forces that govern the supernatural, is evident almost throughout the whole dramatic poem. One particularly revealing example of Manfred's profound power comes from "Act I, Scene I", where Manfred summons the seven spirits only through the power of his will. The following is an abbreviated quotation from the scene at hand:

Mysterious Agency!

Ye Spirits of the unbounded Universe!

[...]

I call upon ye by the written charm

Which gives me power upon you—Rise! Appear! (Byron, "Manfred").

The quotation reveals one of the most remarkable, yet also one of the most mysterious abilities that Manfred possesses, namely, a certain type of undisclosed supernatural power which allows him to summon and subdue various supernatural forces and creatures. While the nature of this power is almost impossible to pinpoint, to the point that Manfred is sometimes compared to an alchemist, a sorcerer, a magus, or to other such practitioners of magic, one thing we can conclude for certain is that he, in his thirst for understanding, has gained access to some arcane knowledge (through the reading of forbidden books) that has allowed him to summon and subdue powers that a mere mortal could never conquer. Although, as is noted previously, the nature of his powers remains somewhat mysterious, the text does provide us with some clues as to how Manfred acquired these mysterious powers. At the very beginning of the dramatic poem, Manfred declares that he has: "sought in darkness and in light" (Byron, "Manfred") the very essence of what gives the supernatural agency. Later on, in "Act I, Scene II", he speaks of how these pursuits have introduced him to the study of spells (see line 2 from "Act I, Scene II") which have further

enhanced his powers. His dominion over the elemental forces from “Act I, Scene I” is merely one such example.

It is worth noting that his powers are well known not only among his fellow human beings, but also among the spirits of the supernatural. The Abbot makes it clear that his name has been associated with frequent rumors of occult involvement. This is conveyed in the following lines:

‘Tis said thou holdest converse with the things
Which are forbidden to the search of man;
That with the dwellers of the dark abodes,
The many evil and unheavenly spirits
Which walk the valley of the Shade of Death,
Thou communest (Byron, “Manfred”).

The spirits are also well aware of Manfred’s dabbling in the supernatural, as when he enters the Hall of Arimanes, one of the spirits immediately recognizes him and informs the others of his powers and abilities. As the other spirits prepare to tear Manfred into pieces for his refusal to kneel before Arimanes (see lines 27-49 from “Act III, Scene III”), the First Destiny says the following to the others with which she prevents their attack:

Hence! Avaunt! —he's mine.
Prince of the Powers invisible! This man
Is of no common order, as his port
And presence here denote: his sufferings
Have been of an immortal nature—like
Our own; his knowledge, and his powers and will,
As far as is compatible with clay,
Which clogs the ethereal essence, have been such
As clay hath seldom borne (Byron, “Manfred”).

Manfred himself affirms that he can invoke and wield a power which enables him to not only enter supernatural realms, but also, when he deems it necessary or desirable, to summon and command supernatural forces to his will. This is first implied in his response to the First Destiny, where he declares the following: “Ye know what I have known; and

without power I could not be amongst ye" (Byron, "Manfred"); and second, in the concluding fight between Manfred and the Spirit, during which he announces the following: "I have commanded / things of an essence greater far than thine" (Byron, "Manfred").

Let us now turn our attention to Eliot's poem, wherein we can also discern an undertone of suggested authority and power which Prufrock seemingly possesses. I have used the word '*seemingly'* quite deliberately, as we shall see further on in the development of this article, Prufrock's alleged claims of understanding and knowledge (or any other degree of authority he assumes over those around him) are disproportionate (incompatible even) to his nature as a person. All of these matters, however, will be dealt with further on in this article; as for now, let us attempt to identify some moment in the poem in which Prufrock displays some degree of power (such that the ordinary people around him do not possess) that we could then parallel with Manfred's prowess. It seems to me that one such moment is the instance when Prufrock compares himself to Lazarus – "I am Lazarus, come from the dead, / Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all" (Eliot, "Prufrock").

In this particular case, the points of convergence are considerably fewer than the previous such cases we have considered. To some extent, one of the most reasonable propositions we can formulate within the scope of this particular parallel (without venturing too far into the bounds of unprovability) is the following. By comparing himself to Lazarus, he adopts the perspective of an extraordinary man who has not only seen the afterlife, but has returned from it. It is the perspective of this eminent biblical person, a person who has experienced the Divine in the most direct and immediate way possible, that gives him the authority as well as the power to position himself above all others. He, like Lazarus, is not an ordinary man like everyone else, but a chosen one who has been to a place from which an ordinary mortal cannot return. It is precisely due to the fact that he has gone to the afterlife and returned from there that he is granted the authority and power to rise above everyone else, as his experience transcends the boundaries of what the mortal mind can comprehend. He becomes a prophetic figure who, through his transcendental experience, becomes a voice of authority that everyone should hear, as he possesses awareness and insight that no mortal mind has ever conceived of. It is through Lazarus' perspective and voice that Prufrock attributes himself with a comparable degree of esoteric knowledge that we associate with Manfred.

The analyzed examples thus far establish what I believe to be common ground between both characters (with a few minor exceptions which I will highlight in the ensuing segments of this analysis). It is important to clarify that the highlighted examples are by no means all possible areas of convergence between the character of Manfred and that of Prufrock with regards to the confluent theme of the Byronic Hero. What I have presented in this analysis is a modest glimpse into certain aspects of Prufrock's character which we, as readers, could perceive as being 'complementary to' or 'evocative of' other such elements in Manfred's character. I would be candidly delighted if a future researcher would be encouraged by the humble observations which this article presents and in so doing to utilize them as a stepping

stone upon which he / she would be able to draw more profound and worthwhile discoveries related to other correlating aspects between the two characters. Yet, the points of convergence between these two characters provide only a partial glimpse within their complex parallel dynamic. This is so because even in the moments where this article has made the proposition that a particular aspect of Prufrock's character is similar to another such aspect from Manfred's character, very often, at the heart of that apparent similarity lies a tremendous difference. Nonetheless, this is not a difference that negates certain elements which are typical of the Byronic Hero from being carried over and from being seemingly fitted into the character of Prufrock; in fact, it is quite the opposite, as Prufrock not only functions as a repository for these elements, but is also able to manifest them at certain points in the development of the poem in such a way that we might indeed be inclined to say (given that we do not look into his character in such depth) that his comments and inclinations are outwardly similar to Manfred's. Yet, as I have alluded to previously, this is only seemingly so.

This article bears the title "Eliot's Prufrock: The Small (Un)Byronic (Anti)Hero" for a reason. On the one hand, as we have already seen, there are certain moments in the development of the poem in which the things that Prufrock states, and the specific way in which he behaves, are remarkably similar to the way in which Manfred himself behaves. I am far from the thought of proposing that these instances are entirely analogous, as they are not, but they are sufficiently imbued with associativity which to some degree permits us to assume that they transmit a degree of resemblance, regardless of how partial and superficial this reverberation might be, so as to allow some degree of complementation to occur. On the other hand, however, we should also note the following. Despite the fact that there are such moments in the poem, on the basis of which we could draw parallels that could show us the potential similarities between Manfred and Prufrock, these same points of overlap very often also indicate fundamental differences in the way specific elements from the Byron Hero are assimilated by Prufrock. This is really quite paradoxical since, on the one hand, Prufrock could be seen as similar to the Byronic Hero, but on the other hand, as we shall see in a moment, as different from him. The paradox, however, lies not so much in the ways in which the parallel between the two characters is established, but rather lies in Prufrock himself, who has been created by Eliot in such a way as to be the functional embodiment of a certain kind of paradoxicality that both allows and denies actualization. In this sense, he is always presented as something, but at the same time as nothing. He always plays the role of a certain type, but also plays no role and of no type. He is somebody but also nobody, he is there but also not quite. It is precisely due to this transparency that Prufrock is never fully actualized as a Byronic Hero (at least not in the full sense of this particular hero type), nor as any other prominent personage to be exact, as he embodies a different type of a character model that is, at least to some extent, something of an antithesis of the conventional leading character that fills the space of the narrative and also functionally drives it forward. Yet, what kind of character is he exactly? We know that Manfred comes to encapsulate a type of central figure that is, as beautifully phrased by the Witch of the Alps: "a man of many thoughts, / and deeds of good and ill, extreme in both"

(Byron, "Manfred"); yet, we do not have a clear understanding of Prufrock's own character type.

Not quite the image of authority, not exactly the epitome of prowess, hardly memorable as a presence, Prufrock, personifies the 'little man' (see, Lee, 2014) in literature. A typical trait of the 'little man' is the fact that he is "modest and meek in nature" (Ruslanovna, 2023, p. 52). What is more, he is also presented not only as someone utterly unremarkable and insignificant, but also as someone that can go unnoticed (overlooked even) by others (see Ruslanovna, 2023, p. 52). This invisible character typically assumes trivial and somewhat meaningless positions in life, like that of a negligible and victimized clerk, who, due to his adverse fate, becomes a helpless prisoner to an unjust social hell that represses him and crushes him emotionally and spiritually (see Marullo, 1981, p. 101). A victim of various social injustices:

The "little man" of literature had two fundamental options: to adopt the values of society, or, more frequently, to be annihilated by madness or death or both. For the "little man" to challenge his lot or to remain permanently estranged from life, however, was inconceivable (...) (Marullo, 1981, p. 101). On the one hand, the meek nature of this character-type could be attributed to the fact that he is typically portrayed as "a middlebrow individual lacking any social status or ambition, physically insignificant and psychologically torpid" (Maguire, 2015, p.185) – in other words, as someone utterly devoid of any capability to achieve anything. On the other hand, this is also caused by his inability to fully verbalize the suffering of his inner world, which remains perpetually sealed within. For this reason, critics have made the observation that these particular character types "are by definition muted, pusillanimous figures" (Maguire, 2015, p. 189) that often experience enormous difficulties when it comes to articulating ideas and communicating clearly (see Maguire, 2015, p. 189). What is more, even their interior monologues, as Maguire indicates, are often delivered in a somewhat awkwardly-structured, vaguely intelligible, and self-contradictory manner (see Maguire, 2015, p. 190). Despite this, at certain instances, their "speech assumes mock-heroic concision, if not eloquence" (Maguire, 2015, p. 190) when engaging with others. The essence of the 'little man' in literature is considerably more complex than this superficial overview, as this character changes over time, in such a way that he gradually begins to problematize his traditional representation in the various works in which he appears in one way or another. Later versions of this character type, depict him as "someone who rejects his position in life and seeks status, although by dubious means" (Marullo, 1981, p. 101). Gradually, he becomes something of a "crass bourgeois who" (Marullo, 1981, p. 101) in his inability to be fully assimilated in society (see p. 101) becomes more and more "frustrated by failure and floundering" (Marullo, 1981, p. 101), which gradually results in his psychological disorientation (see p. 101).

Even at first glance, without delving too deeply into Prufrock's character, we can make the proposition, albeit based on the admittedly limited and superficial observations related to the 'little man' in literature, that Prufrock fits perfectly in this character type. Although Prufrock's thoughts and ambitions are grand, his existence is insignificant. His presence is

negligible, so negligible even that he is almost invisible to everyone around him. Let us look at the well-known scene from the poem in which the ladies are talking to each other about Michelangelo. Although Prufrock is physically there among them, the ladies do not notice him at all. Instead, they are engrossed in conversations about the great Italian painter and sculptor. None of them notice (or acknowledge) the fact that there is another person in their midst. Yet he is there, ever present but never seen, like a ghost whose presence cannot be detected by the living. To some extent, he is somewhat aware of the fact that he is insignificant as well as inconspicuous to those around him. He self-defines, at certain points in the poem, as a small, trivial, if not completely transparent man, who is slowly but surely aging without having left anything behind. His concern is that people see and perceive him in that manner as well. When he makes the remark related to the topic of conversation of the ladies at the party, he feels anxious, while standing there among them, that they will make disparaging remarks about his appearance. He anticipates that they will speak ill of: "how his hair is growing thin!" (Eliot, "Prufrock"), "how his arms and legs are thin!" (Eliot, "Prufrock"), how he has "grown slightly bald" (Eliot, "Prufrock"), and how his "necktie [is] rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin" (Eliot, "Prufrock"). In other words, he is not only anxious about the way that he looks, but is apprehensive of the fact that he might be perceived as being even more inconspicuous and transparent than he already is. He dreads the fact that even if people notice him by some chance, they will only remember him (or judge him) by his unassuming appearance – they will form an assessment of him as a person based only on how he is dressed, the condition of his hair, and all the other physical attributes that make up his overall appearance. In this respect, he feels like nothing more than an insect (a specimen) that is being prepared to be taxidermied. This is conveyed through the following quote:

> The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
>
> And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
>
> When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall, (Eliot, "Prufrock").

From his perspective, he is no different than an insect (imagine if Manfred would ever think of comparing himself to an insect), nailed down by a pin, that is being examined by some taxidermist, who will then simply put him on display either to serve some sort of educational purpose, or simply to become a decorative piece to be observed by others. The comparison is extremely revealing. Prufrock likens his existence to the life of an insect, an animal that is sometimes not quite noticed by humans, a creature that is also sometimes avoided by them (because of the way it may look), and in more dramatic cases, is trampled by humans, is chased, or even killed (intentionally or not) by them. Prufrock feels not only diminished and insignificant as an insect, at least in relation to the people he aspires to, but also helpless, like a specimen whose limbs are being arranged in a desirable position before being permanently fixed on the pinning board with an entomological pin. He is nothing

more than a helpless exhibit piece that is displayed for people to observe and analyze. In this respect he has no individual meaning – his significance is determined by other's assessment of his decorative arrangement. More often than not, his arrangement goes completely unnoticed. In the rare instances when he does get noticed, he is examined for his defects rather than his sense of worth.

Aside from the fact that he likens himself to an insect, Prufrock fits perfectly into the image of the 'little man' in literature due to his occupation. The preceding segment mentions how this type of character traditionally occupies and performs minor vocations (or roles) in life, the most typical of which being an insignificant clerk who has no meaningful (or worthwhile) functionality. This is implied by Prufrock himself in the following quote:

> [I] am an attendant lord, one that will do
> To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
> Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
> Deferential, glad to be of use,
> Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
> Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
> At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
> Almost, at times, the Fool (Eliot, "Prufrock").

This quotation reveals that Prufrock, like the little man in literature, also occupies and performs a minor social role with trivial (negligible even) societal relevance. Although Eliot never explicitly indicates that Prufrock is a clerk, at least not in the conventional functionality of the secretarial or administrative profession, the selected quotation gives us reason to assume that his role in life is at least somewhat similar to the functionality of a clerk. Prufrock himself hints at this by saying that he is not a significant figure, as Hamlet is, but is merely a supplementary character, whose only sole efficacy is to provide support and assistance to people more prominent and significant than him. Viewed through this perspective, we could make the proposition that he does not even regard himself as a person who, through his agency and will, performs all these supporting and auxiliary functions, but rather views himself as a minor administrative utility of sorts, which, like a machine, is ready to serve the needs of the user. Regardless as to whether he performs the role of an advisor or an assistant, he very clearly aligns himself, as well as his social functionality, not with that of a leader or visionary, but with the supportive and servicing function of a clerk, who is always working for, or serving the needs of, some prominent figure. Despite the fact that he is devoted and glad to be of use for the attainment of someone else's aims and ambitions, like all minor clerks, he not only remains unsung, but is left in the shadow of obscurity and nameless peripheries of all the eminent figures for whom he so devotedly

labors. In this respect, Prufrock sees himself as nothing more than a tool that, once used by someone, can easily be forgotten, lost, or replaced entirely.

The astute reader has probably already noticed the perceptible disparity between Prufrock's character and that of Manfred. One of the main things that strikes us almost immediately is the fact that while Prufrock is invisible to those around him, Manfred is not. Although the women at the party walk in and out of the room where Prufrock is situated, none of them notice that he is there. He is so invisible and inconspicuous that the guests simply do not notice his presence there. During the course of the party, everyone is engaged in conversations and various social interactions of which Prufrock is not a part of simply due to the fact that no one notices him. Manfred is the polar opposite of Prufrock in this respect. His presence in a scene or in a particular sequence is always characterized by his focal standing. Even in the moments when he encounters various supernatural forces, it is he, not they, who dominates the scene. One of the most prominent such examples can be found in the scene in which Manfred enters the hall of Arimanes. Although Arimanes is a deity, the mortal Manfred is the one who dominates the composition of the scene. Moreover, in most of the instances in which Manfred faces the various forces of the supernatural, these forces quite often know exactly who Manfred is, that is, they have not only heard of him as a person, but are also aware of what powers he possesses and what knowledge he has accumulated over the years. The contrast between him and Prufrock is extremely striking in this regard, as no one knows who Prufrock is in a mere social gathering of mortals, while even the forces of the supernatural know exactly who Manfred is and what he is capable of. While Prufrock longs to be noticed by these people, Manfred is not only noticed by them, but commands a compelling allure that fascinates them; that is to say, he, unlike Prufrock, is the object of interest both to the forces of the supernatural, but also to the mortals of the earth themselves – Prufrock's coveted public. People's interest in Manfred is evident in his encounter with the Abbot, who discreetly tells him that the populace talks about how he is engaged in dealings with the supernatural. Even Manfred's servants are intrigued by what exactly their master does in his chambers. In contrast, no one seems to be intrigued with the "days and ways" (Eliot, "Prufrock") of Prufrock.

Another radical discrepancy between the two characters is related to the different nature of their isolation. On the one hand, Manfred's isolation is a matter of choice, whereas Prufrock's is simply a consequence of his transparency and invisibility. From the very beginning of the dramatic poem, Manfred stresses the fact that he is different from all other mortals and as such does not wish his existence to be associated with, or cross paths with, those of the common people. He considers himself intellectually superior to all others and as such is driven by ambitions and desires far grander than the trivial and everyday aspirations of ordinary people. A similar observation is made by McVeigh, who notes the following:

> Manfred's curse is that he is not Everyman; better than other men, he is also worse. On one level, of course, he is *Ben Adam*, the Child of Clay or Son of Earth - a spirit

> encased in flesh whose protest differs from that of other mortals only in being more fiery. But Manfred's is a destructive flame, and his curse goes far beyond that of a Phaethon whose aspiration outreaches possibility. His curse is not that he is a man, but that he is Manfred (McVeigh, 1982, p. 606).

For this reason, he is driven from an early age by the desire to separate himself from the people who both debase him and always remind him of the fact that he is mortal and made of the same substance that they are. Every single social interaction with a person that Manfred encounters during his travels (the Chamois Hunter, the Abbot, etc.) is marked by a feeling of profound contempt and condescension for all that these people not only say and share, but for the advice they want to give him in order to save him from his inevitable self-destruction. Prufrock's isolation, on the other hand, is not a consequence of his unwillingness to be associated with other people, but of the fact that he is too small and insignificant to be noticed by them. Alienated and unnoticed by the world, Prufrock has no realistic prospect of existence other than isolation. No matter how much Prufrock fools himself that he has no need for people and society, and no matter how much he tries to detach himself even further from them, the truth is that he needs these people all too much. To some extent, we could say that in his desire to become "a pair of ragged claws / scuttling across the floors of silent seas" (Eliot, "Prufrock") he comes close to Manfred's desire for absolute detachment from people, as well as from the mortal world with its trivial and insignificant ambitions, but in Prufrock's case things are a little more complex. Undoubtedly, he wants to gain peace by cutting himself off from society and the people who show no care for him and who isolate him, but he also perceives that it is only through these people, through their attention and approval, that he will be able to make a name for himself and will ultimately be remembered. That is to say, these people, regardless of his negative feelings towards them, are necessary to him and to his ambitions and aspirations because without them he is a nobody. In his case, however, he is still a nobody even with them, as he remains totally ignored and overlooked by them.

In this respect Manfred is quite straightforward as he does not care if people remember him or not. Right from the start when he faces the seven spirits, he says that he wants to die and shows no concern about his legacy and name – in other words, he simply just does not care about what happens to him, all that he craves for is "Oblivion – self-oblivion" (Byron, "Manfred"). To some extent, people for Manfred are somewhat inconsequential, as they are driven by base desires, constrained dreams, and primitive ambitions, all aspects of the human conditions that he himself has overcome. Since he considers people as finite-minded and narrow-sighted, at least when compared to him, he shows no interest in what they think of him, or in what way they perceive him. For this reason, he is not interested in how the blind masses would remember him, nor is he interested in the concept of fame within the mortal world, where everything is the product of the social construct of these same narrow-minded creatures. He isolates himself from everything and everyone, as he does not want to be part of their system of limited concepts, views, ambitions, desires, and knowledge.

Not only do they simply present no interest to him, on the contrary, they disgust him. Meaningless to him is the glory or fame that would be dispersed among such finite minds and in such a mortal system of limited and artificially constructed conventions and principles of social and existential acceptability and normality.

Prufrock, it seems to me, is far more superficial in this respect. Despite the fact that he does not hide his negative attitude, as well as his negative feelings, towards the shallow and contrived fabric of society in which he lives, he, however, also exhibits a profoundly shallow way of thinking at other times as well. On the one hand, within the scope of his internal monologue, he criticizes people for their superficiality and is seemingly not only repulsed by their behavior, but also indicates that he does not share their views. He is disgusted by the fact that people in this society put such a tremendous emphasis on the way people look, how they dress, and what accessories they wear; while no one shows any active interest in one's intellectual capacity. It is no coincidence, then, that the conversations about Michelangelo are so brief, just a highlight in the overall composition of the poem, that shows how perfunctory his presence is in people's lives in this superficial society – his legacy and his achievements are reduced to only a name that is meant to decorate a conversation. To him, all of this is indicative of the superficial values, shallow interpersonal relationships, insubstantial beliefs, hollow visions, and contrived vindications of individuals, who have been debased to nothing more than artificial facades that society upholds as a consensual normality.

To some extent, in his quiet critique, Prufrock comes close yet again to Manfred's character, yet Manfred is not at all quiet when it comes to voicing his disillusionment with the masses and society. As much as Prufrock is discontented with the superficial nature of this society and as much as he resents the fact that his existence will be reduced to his balding hair, his weak arms and legs, and his modest accessories, he is still aware that this flawed and artificial society is the only thing he has – he is not only in its grip, but is also quite dependent on it. If he is to overcome his anonymity and his transparency, if he is to make a name for himself, he will have to do so within the scope of this very society. In other words, as much as he approaches these people with a certain amount of condescension, like Manfred himself, he still realizes that he needs them because they will be the ones who will have to speak of him and this very same society will be the place within which (the stage upon which) his fame will be borne and will ultimately manifest itself in. Although isolated from these people and from this public, he yearns to break free from the chains of his anonymity and be the center of attention of the people, of the ladies, of the party, of the public sphere in general. What is tragic, however, about his character is the fact that he can never become the center of anything, as he has no real fame, greatness, or anything that would make him noticeable or memorable. This stands in stark contrast with Manfred, who, although possessing everything earthly that Prufrock dreams of (fame, greatness, power), simply does not share his vision of earthly glory – instead, he chooses social isolation.

Their isolation, nonetheless, is also quite similar. Despite the fact that one character is isolated by choice (Manfred) and the other as a result of how small and trivial he is

(Prufrock), the site of their isolation is very much the same – the mind. Although the physical location within which the broader notion of isolation manifests is different, one being the Alps and the other being a party, the sense of isolation from society and from people is most prominently manifested in the minds of both characters. In this sense, the mind becomes something of a refuge for both Manfred and Prufrock, a place in which they can not only express their innermost and deepest of thoughts, but also a sanctum where they can safely ponder over the most profound and sacred of questions related to every aspect of existence. Since this private sanctuary is inaccessible to outsiders, both characters can not only be who they truly are, but in being their most genuine of selves enable us to gain direct insight into their inner agony, mental anguish, and existential burden; the depths of which often remain buried in their isolation from everything and everyone. It is no coincidence that much of the action of the dramatic poem unfolds within the scope of Manfred's long and introspective musings, which serve as a mirror to the soul and mind of the Byronic hero. It would indeed be quite intriguing if Eliot himself had drawn inspiration from Manfred's long-winded and elaborate musings when structuring the exposition of his poem, as Prufrock's discourse is indeed quite similar to the drawn-out and internalized ponderings so typical of Manfred. We need not forget that the whole of "Prufrock" is something of an internalized contemplation, which is in no way inferior, either in length or in scope, to the long inner wanderings of Manfred. This meditative exposition performs much the same role as it does in Manfred's case, that of a mirror turned towards Prufrock's soul and mind, through which we can enter the inner world of this tormented character and get a glimpse of his troubles and desires. Nowhere is the sense of isolation and alienation from society more strongly indicated than in the presence of these long and introspective musings into which both characters seem fated to spiral. Since they have no audience to appreciate what they have to say, no public to grasp the profound depths and magnitude of their intellectual and emotional prowess, they become their own most faithful and devout listeners. Their philosophical meditations are for no one but themselves, for there is no one else who can understand them so well and can penetrate so deeply into the nature of their troubles and suffering than they themselves.

Nonetheless, the essence of their reflections is not entirely complementary. Although both characters' minds are caught up in metaphysical and transcendental meditations on the nature of life, the human condition, and what lies beyond the limits of the human, Prufrock's thoughts sometimes stray from these far-reaching concepts and concerns and relegate themselves to the purely mundane – to earthly glory, earthly power, earthly grandeur. In contrast, Manfred's thoughts never wander towards such trivial and minute topics, his mind always remains fixed on the infinite. An interesting nuance also emerges when we ponder a bit more over the nature of these thoughts as well as the inner world they constitute. Manfred's thoughts become an exceptionally rich and intensely varied world of ideas, concepts, beliefs, and views. This inner world is not exclusively a refuge for him which is meant to protect him from the outside world, but is also a kind outlet for expression through which he can demonstrate his grandeur. With Prufrock things are quite different. It seems to me that in Prufrock's case, his inner world does become a kind of sanctuary for his

thoughts and feelings that he is not willing to share with the outside world. Whereas Manfred does not share what he thinks and feels because there is no human or supernatural being who can fathom the depths of his mind and soul, Prufrock does not share his inner world out of fear. By shutting himself in he simply escapes from social relationships which for him subconsciously mean rejection, from the prospect of love which for him will ultimately result in failure, and in general from any type of action which for him will automatically result in consequence which he is not ready to face. His mind is thus not so much a potent medium for expression, or a stage upon which he can enact the grandeur and prowess of his inner world, as is the case with Manfred, but is rather a kind of labyrinth that he himself finds difficult to navigate.

If, however, we reflect a bit more on the role that the mind plays in the discourse of the two characters, we might perceive another similarity. As much as the mind performs the function of a place of refuge for both characters, it is also a prison for them as well – a jail cell in which they suffer and agonize profoundly. It is also intriguing that this infernal prison of theirs, or this psychological self-enslavement as Sperry labels it (see Sperry, 1974, p. 194), is, at least to some extent, self-imposed – in other words, they not only created this place of suffering by themselves, but they also placed themselves there on their own accord. From the very beginning of the dramatic poem, we understand that Manfred is in a state of absolute melancholy and despair which is brought about: first, by his incessant search for forbidden knowledge which has brought him only suffering and pain, and second by a mysterious sin, or "by a species of remorse, the cause of which is left half unexplained" (Evans, 1947, p. 751), related to a woman named Astarte, which ravages his mental and spiritual landscape. As early as in "Act I, Scene I" he states that the knowledge he possesses has brought him nothing but suffering:

Sorrow is Knowledge: they who know the most
Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth,
The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life.
Philosophy and science, and the springs
Of Wonder, and the wisdom of the World,
I have essayed, and in my mind there is
A power to make these subject to itself—
But they avail not: (...) (Byron, "Manfred").

The more knowledge he acquires and the more he sees through the fabric of existence, the more his mind suffers and agonizes in consequence of what he can behold. Not only does this isolate him from others who, though limited in their awareness of the word, are at least content, but it causes him to withdraw deeper into his mind, where he not only cannot find

peace of mind, but on the contrary, he endures self-inflicted anguish and mental suffering. The knowledge which he has obtained in consequence of his dealings with the powers of the supernatural has neither satisfied his thirst for knowledge nor given him absolution from his mysterious sin – in fact, his expanded awareness has only increased his inner pain and heightened his mental suffering. Though he seeks knowledge beyond the limits of the human, as well as power that goes beyond the boundaries of the mortal, that can absolve his deed, he finds only torment and not peace. For this reason, Sperry rightfully deems Manfred:

> (...) the imprisoned or self-imprisoned Prometheus, the prey of his own reflections. However, he is also Prometheus in his earlier and more active form, the type of Faustus, the poet-magician, who by his science has gained a measure of control over the spirits of the elements (...) (Sperry, 1974, p. 193).

While Manfred has fainted as a result of seeing the true form of the spirits from "Act I, Scene I", these same spirits very astutely understand that: "In proving every poison known, / I found the strongest was thine own" (Byron, 'Manfred'), as well as the fact that he is already in the most agonizing version of hell possible, the one he has created for himself – "Thyself to be thy proper Hell!" (Byron, "Manfred"). Although this hellish prison of his has no real chains to shackle him and bind him to hellish suffering and agony, he is constrained in psychological chains that bind his heart and mind to the torments of hell. "And the clankless chain hath bound thee; / O'er thy heart and brain together" (Byron, "Manfred"). These chains, as the spirits inform us, are invisible and follow him wherever he goes – in other words, his hell is always with him, since he himself is the sepulcher of that hell. He is doomed to continually relive in constant thoughts and ceaseless reflections the circumstances of his suffering, without resolution nor end. Unable to forget, to change, or to find peace for what he has done, the only thing left for him is to continually struggle in his mind with his excessive knowledge of the world, the universe, the afterlife, and the supernatural, which brings him nothing but misery. Unable to find solace among humans and to find empathy from the indifferent universe, Manfred withdraws into himself, as consequence of which his mind not only becomes, as Harvey indicates, "morbidly analytic" (Harvey. 1969, p. 306), but also becomes both judge and jury. "For as Manfred steadfastly continues to reject every claim that traditional authority can make, he is driven only the more inexorably back upon himself" (Sperry, 1974, p. 195).

Like Manfred, Prufrock is also a prisoner of his own mind. The astute reader will immediately notice that the entire poem takes place in Prufrock's consciousness – even everything he sees and describes is presented to us through his mental kaleidoscope of paralyzing thoughts, reflections, and judgments. It is through this dramatic monologue which unfolds entirely within the confines of the mind, that we not only gain insight into Prufrock's thoughts and reflections, in much the same way that we gain insight into

Manfred's consciousness, but we also get a glimpse within the mind of this complex and multi-layered character, who like Manfred, is profoundly tormented mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. Yet, what torments Prufrock is not exactly the forbidden knowledge that weighs on Manfred's mind like a burden, nor is it some grievous sin that haunts him constantly and gives him no peace; but, is rather the nothingness of his existence, his transparency, and his insignificance as a man who will not be remembered by anyone. Prufrock's mental hell is continually suggested to the reader through the moments of constant self-reflections which always find a way to circle around his existential triviality, as well as around the realization that no one will remember him after his death. Realizing his insignificance and discerning that time is not on his side, Prufrock falls into a state of absolute paralysis – a living hell – in which he does not know what to do, what to think, or how to act. This condition of ceaseless mental and emotional torment is only further exacerbated by his heightened knowledge of society and the world which only distances him from those around him and draws him further into himself.

Here I take the liberty of making just one passing comment related to the nature of this comprehension. The reader need not delve much into the discourse of the two characters to arrive at the realization that the knowledge which both characters possess is quite different. On the one hand, Manfred's knowledge is formidable. The depth of his understanding related to the occult and supernatural not only exceeds the limits of an ordinary person, but also manages to resonate a note of fear in the forces of the supernatural as well. On the other hand, Prufrock's knowledge, thought at times presented as being complementary to that of Manfred, is somewhat more psychological. Nonetheless, even his psychological acuity is enough to elevate him above the people at the social gathering, as his analytical insight far exceeds that of the guests in attendance, who are preoccupied solely with superficial conversations and evaluations of appearance. Despite this discrepancy, Prufrock not only remains distanced from the world due to his deepened insight, as Manfred does, not only is this elevated perception internalized, as it is in Manfred's case, but he also transforms this internal struggle to a living hell which directly complements Manfred's state of existence.

We must not forget, however, that the site of Prufrock's and of Manfred's suffering is not any actual hell, but is the mind. It seems that Prufrock is bound by the same invisible chains that haunt Manfred wherever he wanders – regardless if that place is the city streets or the party, hell is always with him, as he is always in it. For this reason, it seems reasonable to speculate that in the case of the two characters, the mind becomes something of a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it shelters the isolated and misunderstood character; on the other hand, however, it binds him in the chains of suffering and anguish. In this utter isolation the mind intensifies its inward gaze and dwells not only around its own wounds, but also in its own labyrinth of pain and suffering. This intensifies self-scrutiny to such a dramatic extent that at some point it becomes impossible to convey thought or experience feeling, as all feelings and thoughts loom towards suffering and pain. "It is impossible to say just what I mean!" (Eliot, "Prufrock"), declares Prufrock. As the minds of both characters withdraw further from the outside world, they become more and more shackled

to their own interior, where both characters ultimately find themselves as prisoners to a contemplative hell of their own making. In retreating further and further into the labyrinth of thoughts which is the mind, Prufrock not only becomes "a man of many thoughts" (Byron, "Manfred"), like Manfred himself, but also assumes Manfred's destiny which is to be a "continuance, of enduring thought" (Byron, "Manfred") that bring about only suffering and pain.

Nonetheless, while Manfred can heroically endure this suffering and pain, and can defy various supernatural forces and deities by proudly asserting his autonomy, Prufrock remains paralyzed and small in his suffering. Realizing how he has wasted life, Prufrock becomes paralyzed and unable to do anything, say anything, or feel anything. He feels "as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen" (Eliot, "Prufrock"). If we are to be completely objective, there is a moment when Manfred also falls into a similar state of paralysis. Here I am referring to the moment when he contemplates throwing himself off the cliffs of the Jungfrau Mountain. As he steps towards the slope and prepares to take the final and fatal step, he is overcome by a state of paralysis:

wherefore do I pause?

I feel the impulse—yet I do not plunge;

I see the peril—yet do not recede;

And my brain reels—and yet my foot is firm: (Byron, "Manfred").

The intriguing aspect of Manfred's paralysis is the fact that he manages to overcome it almost in an instant, while Prufrock struggles with it his whole life. Nonetheless, it is Manfred's ability to overcome such moments of crisis that label him a monumental hero, while Prufrock, who remains a perpetual prisoner to doubt and inaction, forever remains the small and insignificant man who pales in comparison, as Manganiello phrases it, to the epic and biblical figures he so desperately aspires to (see Manganiello, 1989, p.21). Precisely because of his existential triviality and stagnation, Prufrock, like the little man, has been shrewdly categorized by Manganiello as "the modern unheroic hero" (Manganiello, 1989, p.21), who is "lost through devious weakness instead of hubris" (Manganiello, 1989, p. 20). This hero-type not only functions as an antithesis of Manfred, but also as something of his caricature.

It is likely that the astute reader has already noticed a contradiction in Prufrock's character. On the one hand, Eliot crafts an isolated and mentally tormented character, whom he then presented to us, the readers, as someone who is possessive of authority as well as power, is highly intelligent, and extremely prideful (even at times haughty) – in other words, Eliot presents us with a certain character type, whom we could, at least in some way, assume is similar to the Byronic Hero. On the other hand, however, Eliot also presents us with another facet of this character – that of the small, repressed, insignificant, trivial, jaded, and aging

man, who is completely invisible to those around him. How, then, can this little man echo the characteristics of the Byronic Hero? How can he be both insignificant and significant, how can he be visible and invisible to those around him, how can he stand above everyone else and yet be below them? The answer to this conflicting question lies in the conflicting depths of Prufrock himself, whose mental state also struggles with the discrepancies of this paradox. Prufrock himself makes no secret of the fact that his inner world is in a state of total chaos. He shares that his emotional and intellectual landscapes are in such a state of discord that he himself cannot understand what exactly he wants, feels, or thinks. The following quote highlights this notion:

> It is impossible to say just what I mean!
>
> But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen (Eliot, "Prufrock").

The quotation reveals that Prufrock feels like a prisoner to a living hell in which he is forced to agonize and suffer in the most excruciating of ways. Within the confines of this inner jailhouse of emotional and spiritual torment, he is overwhelmed and tortured by his inner demons which leave him in a state of absolute mental despair. Unable to feel anything and to think anything, he is left completely helpless and paralyzed in the face of the utter hopelessness of his existential crisis. He becomes a prisoner of doubt, suspicion, apprehension, fear, distrust, and skepticism which make him spellbound to a vicious circle of perpetual indecision that ultimately leaves him incapable of accomplishing anything worthwhile in his life. At the heart of this existential stagnation stands the realization that he has accomplished nothing worthwhile throughout his whole life which has been wasted in cigarette smoking and coffee drinking. As a consequence of the years of reflection, and the years in which those reflections have been interspersed with other reflections, Prufrock has achieved nothing meaningful or memorable in his life. His entire existence has been marked by inner thoughts, theoretical ambitions, hypothetical insights, but never anything concrete or memorable. Driven by the dreadful realization that one day the world will completely forget about him, about his life, his thoughts, his ambitions, his feelings, his existence in general, that ultimately creates tension within him; as, despite his existential failure, he wants to be remembered, wants the world to know about what he thinks, what his ambitions are, what he feels. This inner psychological strain incites an inner struggle so profound and potent that ultimately splits Prufrock into two conflicting sides. As we will see in a moment, it is in one of these two conflicting sides that the Byronic Hero finds its manifestation.

A number of critics who have examined Eliot's poem have observed that Prufrock suffers from internal dissonance. One such critic is Nag, who in his article "Prufrock as a Modern Man in Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (2024), notes that: "Prufrock's mind wavers between two opposing selves – one longing for romantic assertion, the other paralyzed by fear and doubt" (Nag, 2024). In "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

Represents Conflict of a Modern Man" (2020), Piash makes a similar argument by writing the following: "Prufrock is an embodiment of split personality – a separation of head and heart, a paralysis of the will (...)" (Piash, 2020). In "T. S. Eliot's Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock: A Reinvigorate Observation" (2017), Singh aligns with the views of these two authors by observing the following: "Prufrock's personality is divided into two selves (...) You, Romantic Self (heart) and I, Realistic Self (mind), and there is a state of contradiction between these two selves because of the timidity, cowardice of Prufrock" (Singh, 2017, p. 42). In his analysis of Prufrock, in turn, Mayer proposes that Eliot was experimenting with the idea that "an emotional experience can be so intense as to split one's personality" (Mayer, 2011, p. 185). Here I will take the liberty of making a few additional remarks on the already existing hypotheses of these authors. To begin with, I would like to express my support for the positions of these authors regarding the idea that Prufrock could indeed be viewed as a character, who is divided into two conflicting sides. Even though I am generally against the idea of referencing my own works, I would like to make a brief comment related to one of these earlier attempts of textual analysis which I have conducted that reflects the affinity between their way of thinking and mine. Again, I would like to highlight the fact that the ambition of this comment is neither to promote, nor to market the modest observation which I have proposed there, but to convey my candid support for the hypothesis which these authors have with regards to Prufrock. The article has as its ambition to explore the manner in which Eliot weaves and integrates certain images, symbols, motifs, characters, and even entire scenes from Dante's "Inferno" within the framework of his poem. One such character is Guido, whom Dante encounters in "Inferno XXVII", who could be viewed in relation to Prufrock himself. The aspect that serves as the basis for the established parallel between the two characters is precisely an internal conflict which ultimately leads to a similar disjunction in both Guido and Prufrock. The very thing that causes this dissonance in both characters is precisely the pressure exercised by their emotional and mental turmoil which ultimately culminates in a rupture. As the self becomes fractured, the two fragments produced display divergent perspectives and approaches towards the existential crisis which is to be overcome in some way (if it is overcome at all). Bearing this in mind and considering the fact that I fully support the claim of Piash that Prufrock "suffers from emotional frustration" (Piash, 2020) and that Eliot "describes what happens in the mind of Prufrock" (Piash, 2020), my view nonetheless diverges from the claim that this internalized split occurs as a result of "too much worry regarding a love proposal" (Piash, 2020). Similarly, as much as I admire Mayer's astute observations about how an "emotional experience can be so intense as to split one's personality" (Mayer, 2011, p. 185), I find myself unable to side with the position that the cause of this rupture is "the failure to love" (Mayer, 2011, p. 185) or "the regret of breaking one's heart" (Mayer, 2011, p. 185). On similar grounds, I have reservations in accepting Singh's claim that the split in Prufrock's character occurs as a result of his lack of "the courage to ask an 'overwhelming question' about his marriage proposal" (Singh, 2017, p.43). Undoubtedly the theme of love is important, after all we ought not to forget that the poem is ostensibly something of a love song, yet love, it seems to me, is not the main cause of the disjunction we observe in

Prufrock. Undeniably, Prufrock has an infatuation with the ladies who are present at the party. Undoubtedly, he wants to be at the center of their attention and to be liked by them, but this never happens as Prufrock is not noticed by them at all. The fundamental problem that weighs on his mind is far more dramatic than the likelihood of his feelings not being reciprocated by the ladies at the gathering, as this is just a hypothetical emotional risk. The paralyzing problem that negates his actions and cripples his thoughts and ambitions is his existential anonymity. The thing that shatters him emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually is the realization that he is a nobody, who has not only lived as a nobody, but will die as one. The fact that he will die without being noticed or remembered by anyone shows us how aware he actually is of his existential failure. Again, I want to emphasize that I am sympathetic to the idea that the fear of unrequited love or of unreciprocated feelings does indeed occupy a central place in Prufrock's inner world, yet this is only one facet of a much larger problem with which Prufrock struggles. The fear of unrequited love is speculative; in other words, the ladies could respond to his feelings, but they could also reject him. The speculative nature of his internal turmoil is evident in the manner in which he phrases his inquiry.

Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,

Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis? (Eliot, “Prufrock”).

If we pay attention to the syntax of this quotation, we can notice that Prufrock uses the modal verb *'should'*, which indicates a state of uncertainty and speculation. In other words, he envisions a hypothetical future, or a hypothetical future scenario, that may or may not happen. What Prufrock really fears, however, is far from being speculative, it is something that he knows and perceives all too well. He understands quite clearly that he has wasted his life in meaningless parties, in pointless coffee drinking, and in senseless cigarette smoking, among people who have never noticed him. He is aware that he has wasted so much time in such purposeless acts and activities that his life ultimately amounts to nothing. In this sense, I believe that the disjunction we observe in Prufrock's character is not so much the result of unrequited love that is speculative, but of wasted time that is quite tangible and real. This, it seems to me, is evident in the very phrasing of the quotation with which he ultimately affirms this.

I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,

And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,

And in short, I was afraid (Eliot, “Prufrock”).

The use of the auxiliary verb *'have'* in its present perfect indicates a completed and actualized occurrence (a past action) which has relevance to the moment of speaking. In other words, he, from the perspective of when this is uttered, informs us, that he has already realized and grasped all of this, and in having already realized it, he has given it concrete agency – it is a tangible prospect that he has known and experienced in the frame of actuality (his immediate reality). Not only has he understood the fact that the moment in which he could have accomplished something worthwhile in his life has withered away, but more importantly (and more frighteningly) he has realized that the end of his existence is slowly but surely approaching. He is conscious of death's slow but inevitable approach which unlike love is not speculative, but is certain.

Something remarkably intriguing occurs in Prufrock's character, however, when he actually perceives his total and absolute transparency and insignificance. Although he understands how small, trivial, hard to notice, and easily forgettable he really is, part of him cannot come to terms with it all. He longs for fame, for people to talk about him, as the ladies talk about Michelangelo, but at the same time he realizes that this is impossible, since these renowned figures have many worthwhile accomplishments and deeds behind their backs, while he has nothing. I am of the conviction that this is the more plausible realization, or the more probable experience, which Mayer mentions in his article that ultimately manages to split Prufrock's character into two opposing sides. What I will attempt to outline in the subsequent part of this paper is the idea that one of these two sides, which for the sake of convenience and clarity I will call *Prufrock I*, has a realistic view of the circumstances that have contributed to the existential failure of his life, while the other side, which I will call *Prufrock II*, not only carries the essence of the Byronic hero, but also attempts to attribute some of the hallmark characteristics of that hero-type to Prufrock. What I will also attempt to present is the fact that these two sides are engaged in a kind of exchange with each other, with Prufrock II attempting to instill a certain degree of (imaginary) authority to that part of Prufrock's character which realizes his existential void.

Right from the very beginning, the poem implies that Prufrock conceals a hidden duality. "Let us go then, you and I" (Eliot, "Prufrock"), he declares. Although this quote could easily be interpreted as Prufrock addressing another unnamed person, who accompanies him on his wanderings through the streets of the city, or who comes with him to the social event which unfolds in the poem (be it a tea party or some other social gathering), a number of critics believe that the mysterious "you" is actually the other part of his split consciousness. With this assertion, I do not, in any way, want to impose the idea that this is the more plausible or more credible way of interpreting this line of poetry, but simply that it *can* be interpreted in this way, and in doing so we lose nothing from our appreciation of this complex and multifaceted character; on the contrary, through this perspective, we see more and understand more, which only further develops our perception and understanding of this seemingly timeless literary figure. Given Prufrock's emotional state, as well as the fact that his inner world is in a state of absolute existential turmoil, it is possible to assume that under the pressure of this intrapersonal strife and under the influence of the emotional and mental forces that are in a constant state of flux within him,

at one point his frame of mind simply collapse. What the poem then presents us could be a documentation of the consequences of this emotional and mental breakdown. I believe that the moment of this breakdown is not presented in the poem; in other words, there is no moment in its development that we can point to and say, "*Here he breaks down emotionally,*" or "*Here begins the disintegration of his consciousness.*" In my humble opinion, there is no such moment in the poem and it should not be sought within its framework and boundaries. My opinion is that this moment occurred before the action of the poem began, that is, when Prufrock delivers the now famous first line, he has already suffered the traumatic event – the notorious emotional event that shatters him mentally and destroys him emotionally. Thus, when he makes his address, he is in fact addressing whatever mental fragment or mental ruin has arisen as a result of his emotional and mental collapse.

It is not realistic to state for certain which of the two sides of Prufrock's character utters the initial line of the address, as it could be either one. Although the context in this case does not assist us in this regard, it does aid us in another, specifically in identifying the intention of these two sides toward one another, which is that of dialogue (at least from one the sides). It is clear from the opening quote that at least one of the two sides wants to establish communication with the other, and that this side intends to lead the other to some desired goal. With great reservation, however, I would venture to suggest that the first line could have been uttered by Prufrock II, since shortly afterwards, we can detect the secondary echo of Prufrock I, who agrees with this proposal by repeating: "Let us go" (Eliot, "Prufrock"), whereby he gives his consent to be accompanied by the echo, or voice, of this newly formed part of his consciousness, which is brought into existence as a result of his utter mental, emotional, and existential collapse. As we shall see in a moment, this part of him is quite passive and up to a certain point agrees with much of what Prufrock II utters and presents as a prospect for obtaining renown and remembrance. With certain degree of caution, I would, however, venture to suggest that the discourse could be initiated by Prufrock II, since he is not only the more authoritative of the two voices, but is also the more assertive of the two, and as such it seems more likely that he would be the one to initiate the sequence, rather than the more passive and timid side of Prufrock, who is all too aware of the circumstances in which he finds himself. The two separate voices become much easier and clearer to identify, especially after Prufrock begins his wanderings through the streets of the city and when he arrives at the party. On his way to said event, existential failure weighs ever so heavily on Prufrock's mind, but Prufrock II confidently asserts that these concerns are completely unfounded, as they still have many years of life ahead of them, during which they will be able to achieve whatever they desire and become famous.

And indeed there will be time

(...)

There will be time, there will be time

To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;

There will be time to murder and create,

And time for all the works and days of hands

That lift and drop a question on your plate;

Time for you and time for me,

And time yet for a hundred indecisions,

And for a hundred visions and revisions,

Before the taking of a toast and tea (Eliot, "Prufrock").

If we were to return for a moment to Byron's work, and if we were to point out one characteristic that makes Manfred what he is, many of us would be inclined to highlight the fact that this distinctive feature is precisely his *unwillingness to submit to anyone or to anything*, regardless if that means spirits, fates, gods or even time itself. As his own sovereign and as his "own Soul's sepulcher" (Byron, "Manfred"), he does not allow the natural and supernatural forces that govern mortals to govern him, for he alone is the master of his life and destiny, not the spirits, gods, or time. In this sense, he comes to embody "a rebellion which [asserts] the independence of the individual and the primacy of his values not only in the face of society, but even in the face of God" (Thorslev, 1965, p. 172). Although Prufrock is the polar opposite of this type of prideful autonomy, by repeating what the Byronic side of him has said, he plays out the fantasy that he, like Manfred, can also be the master of time, not its servant, that his destiny is not predetermined by time, but that he can actually rewrite his fate at any moment, because he, as his own sovereign, commands his time and decides when something will happen. His fantasy is Manfred's reality, one of defiance against anything that tries to impose limits or boundaries on his existence, against anything that tries to dictate how his life should unfold – it is a fantasy in which he, like Manfred, takes control of his own life and decides where and when he will go, rather than when and where someone else has predetermined that he should go. Seemingly intoxicated by this prospect and by the dream that he truly has time to become famous, or to achieve something that people will remember him for and talk about for years after his death, Prufrock I eagerly agrees with Prufrock II's statement by affirming the following:

And indeed there will be time

To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"

Time to turn back and descend the stair,

With a bald spot in the middle of my hair (Eliot, "Prufrock").

The coordinating conjunction *"and"* plays a key role in the exchange between the two voices. If we look closely at the line, we can discern that Prufrock I does not begin a new thought, nor does he say anything contrary to what Prufrock II has uttered; on the contrary, he gleefully agrees with what his Byronic self has stated, as if nodding in a gesture of agreement. In other words, he not only enthusiastically concurs with what Prufrock II has conveyed, but also begins to see the prospect of time as something real and tangible. Through the conjunction *'and'*, he simply aligns himself with the vision of Prufrock II, as if saying, "*yes, indeed, I will have time to achieve everything I want, because I am the master of my time*." Yet, this is only a postponement of the inevitable, which gives him only a temporary sense of comfort. Although enthralled by the idea that he is the master of his own time, reality still manages to find its way into his tormented consciousness and like an echo reminds him: "how his hair is growing thin!" (Eliot, 'Prufrock') and: "how his arms and legs are thin!" (Eliot, "Prufrock"). Clinging to the prospect of time, which is not reiterated several times merely due to chance, Prufrock only creates a comforting illusion that gives him a moment of respite from his otherwise meaningless life and his tragic reality. Provoked by the prospect that he might be beginning to waver from his vision of authoritative dominion over his life and fate, the side of Prufrock which reverberates the essence of the Byronic Hero attempts to instill in him a sense of formidable knowledge and insights similar to those of Manfred.

For I have known them all already, known them all:

Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons, (Eliot, "Prufrock").

As Prufrock II attempts to convince Prufrock I that he, like Manfred, is the master of his own destiny and fate, he senses resistance from the voice of reason, the same voice that reminds Prufrock that he is going bald and that his hands are waning, endeavors now to ascribe him with a vast depth of knowledge and a sense of overwhelming insight into the human condition which Manfred also reverberates. This voice not only insinuates that he possesses knowledge that ordinary mortals could never have, but that this knowledge elevates him far above the ordinary people he might meet on the streets, or encounter at one of the parties he attends. This voice seems to be implying to his other half that he is a figure of Manfred's stature, as he also possesses an expanded awareness of the world. This enhanced understanding not only elevates him above the mundane and trivial framework of society, but sets him apart from all structures and hierarchies. Previously, such a manipulation would only have reinforced Prufrock's self-delusion, but now this is not the case. Despite Prufrock II's attempt to instill a certain aspect of the Byronic hero's character in his other self, Prufrock I's voice disagrees with what has been said and begins to assert his own thoughts and reflection. "I have measured out my life with coffee spoons" (Eliot, "Prufrock"), he replies. Instead of agreeing with what is said, as was the case at the beginning of their exchange, we can now clearly see how Prufrock, in a rather direct

manner, affirms his own sense of triviality and insignificance. As a result of his counterargument, Prufrock's Byronic daydreaming is grounded in the modernist reality of the little man, who finds himself in a state of total spiritual and mental paralysis and stagnation. Throughout the rest of the poem, we can discern a similar interaction between the two voices. On the one hand, the voice of Prufrock II attempts to instill unrealistic, yet coveted ideas, while Prufrock I responds with realistic answers. For example, when Prufrock II states: "and I have known the eyes already, known them all" (Eliot, "Prufrock"), Prufrock II replies that he too is familiar with such looks, but they are beyond his control; the looks he is accustomed to are those that always judge him for something and always categorize him in some way. These are all looks that he does not control, but rather they control him.

The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,

And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,

When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,

Then how should I begin

To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?

And how should I presume? (Eliot, "Prufrock").

One of the main blows to his Byronic self comes from his desire to become: "(...) a pair of ragged claws / scuttling across the floors of silent seas" (Eliot, "Prufrock"). The quote in question reveals Prufrock's desire not only to distance himself from the ideas that Prufrock II instills in him, but to completely break away from that part of himself. He is well aware that his life is not grandiose, nor are his exploits as impressive as those of Manfred, so that he can be like him; on the contrary, he understands his triviality and insignificance, as a result of which he wants to take his rightful place in the world, not among heroes or famous personages, but among the crustaceans that inhabit only the most remote and isolated parts of the world, parts totally cut off from people. Undoubtedly, his desire for self-isolation brings him closer to Manfred, who isolates himself in the Alps, but Manfred's isolation is grand and elevated, while Prufrock's is completely trivial – it is the antithesis, or the comical representation, of the exalted and imposing nature of Manfred's isolation. Manfred is isolated as he stands above all the natural and supernatural forces that govern the world, Prufrock is isolated as he cannot face the world. In this sense, his isolation is not a consequence of pride, as in Manfred's case, but rather of fear, anxiety, even escapism from a world that is too cruel, even unbearable for Prufrock. He is not the tragic and proud, but strong and fearless outcast that Manfred is, but is rather a cowardly and paralyzed arthropod or invertebrate, who is so far removed from the world that people might not even be aware of his existence. In one of his last attempts to instill a sense of authority and power in this

paralyzed part of himself, which is increasingly beginning to perceive the true nature of his existence, Prufrock II declares the following:

> Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter, (Eliot, "Prufrock").

And a little later, the following:

> I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
>
> Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all (Eliot, "Prufrock").

In a final effort, Prufrock II attempts to convince his other self that his existence is not so trivial after all, but could in fact be compared to the exalted lives and legacies of the distinguished people from history, whose existence is raised above mortality, such as John the Baptist and Lazarus in this particular case. By comparing himself to John the Baptist, he not only transforms his personal and trivial suffering into something grand, but also transfigures himself from an insignificant figure into a martyr. The irony in this comparison is tremendous, since Prufrock's fate is not to lose his life for defending a sacred truth, as is the case with John the Baptist, but to be unnoticed at a superficial social event he attends. Although the images of John the Baptist and Manfred are radically different, they could be united under a common denominator, which is *their refusal to submit*. Even though the nature of their defiant stand is vastly different – one refusing to yield to Herod because of religious and moral beliefs, while the other unwilling to bend the knee to the forces of the natural and supernatural world out of pride – they are still similar in that they face (and oppose) forces much greater than themselves. It is possible that within the scope of this comparison, Prufrock II wishes to instill the same sense of grand defiance in his other self and thus make him envision himself as a martyr, or someone who, like Manfred, endures heroic suffering as one. Through the second quote, the Byronic part of Prufrock appropriates the voice of another exalted figure, that of Lazarus, whose perspective and knowledge transcend the limitations of the human and the earthly, as he has sacred experience of the afterlife and of the divine. This voice could be viewed as an echo of Manfred's own voice, who, like Lazarus, possesses knowledge and insights beyond the earthly – knowledge that is accessible only to an exclusive few of which he is a part. Within this self-delusion, Prufrock attempts to construct an identity upon which the entire Byronic hero is built – he, like Manfred, presents himself not only as the lone wanderer who has crossed the boundaries of this world and the next, the martyr, who through his knowledge and insight into the manner in which the natural and supernatural operates, has faced spirits and gods and returned to tell the tale, but also as the great seer to whom all things are laid bare and known.

The intriguing aspect of Prufrock's borrowing of voices, however, is the fact that Manfred does not need to borrow anyone else's voice; his own voice is sufficiently authoritative and a source of power (whether intellectual or related to the mysterious forces that he can command). In the case of Prufrock, this Byronic voice disintegrates almost as soon as it is uttered. Even the ending of the poem indicates that Prufrock's Byronic voice is completely debunked. Towards the end of the poem, Prufrock has not only clearly seen the true nature of his existence, his triviality and insignificance, but has also come to terms with this reality. Almost immediately after the Byronic voice finishes his statement, the part of him that is fully aware of his circumstances exclaims emphatically:

I am no prophet — and here's no great matter;

I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,

And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,

And in short, I was afraid (Eliot, "Prufrock").

Followed by:

That is not what I meant at all;

That is not it, at all (Eliot, "Prufrock").

His tragic confession is concluded by the segment which begins with the quote: "No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was I meant to be" (Eliot, "Prufrock"). This series of statements, uttered by the part of him that obviously has a much more realistic view of the circumstances in which he finds himself, allows us to assume that perhaps at the end of his discourse, he has already truly understood that there is no realistic possibility for him to become famous and be remembered by people and society. By uttering these words, he very clearly shows that he is aware that he is a small and trivial person, who has lived and will die as a nobody. He clearly understands that he is the complete opposite of all exalted personalities, including Manfred, whose strength, capacity, authority, and power he has long played out in his imagination. Although he desperately desires to be more than he actually is, and although he fantasizes about a prospect in which he is exalted and glorified, the reality is that he can only achieve these ambitions within the confines of his imagination. Only there can he transform his isolation into a tragic hermitage, similar to that of Manfred, only there can his suffering swell to the proportions and scale of Manfred's whirlwind of feelings and emotions that swarms his mind and soul. Yet even then, even within the confines of his fantasy, he remains a caricature of tragedy, authority, power, intellect, in short, a caricature of the heroic, the Byronic, and of Manfred as a whole. All of Prufrock's fantasies of greatness are nothing more than costumes (or masks) that

Prufrock can put on for a moment to give himself some imaginary existential weight. This false existential weight comes from his Byronic self, who tries in every way to inflate his sense of greatness to the level of the heroic. Yet, this voice is constantly contrasted with the voice of realism and skepticism, which ultimately leaves Prufrock in a state of oscillation between dreaming of the heroic and dwelling on the realistic. It is precisely due to this constant state of alternation between these two extremes (reality and fantasy), that Prufrock is not only unable to fully embody the character of the Byronic hero, or of any other hero, in his imagination, but he is also unable to embody his own identity within reality as well. He is suspended in an existential vestibule which negates him from fully assuming other identities, but also from fully actualizing his own. The tragic part about him is that, on the one hand, he cannot fully dedicate himself to the role of being a Manfred of sorts, but also that he cannot fully commit to being himself. Unable to anchor himself in either reality or illusion, he is doomed to wander the borderline space between these two worlds, where he is never actualized as anything. He remains forever suspended in a state of perpetual negation of being, which prevents him from becoming neither a Manfred nor a Prufrock.

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