Abstract

This study aims at showing the importance of objective correlative in expressing emotion indirectly. It is divided into an introduction and two other sections. The introduction tackles the definition of this term and alludes to its origin. The second section is devoted to the use of imagery as a medium for objective correlative. Images are studied according to the emotion they evoke. They are roughly classified as images of discontentment, images of alienation and loss which in their turn lead to animal images which express debasement. In the last section the present study tackles symbols as further media for objective correlative. It presents three important symbols which are closely related to Prufrock's problem concerning sex. It also deals with other devices such as repetitions and allusions which are regarded as important media for objective correlative.
1- Introduction

As literature, like any other activity, is in constant development, it becomes necessary for literary criticism to produce and, sometimes, invent new terms to offer further directions for understanding and analyzing literary texts. Objective correlative is one of the twentieth century critical products which participates in giving the critical theory a notable push and take the text out of the circle of some conventional approaches. This term, however, was first used by the American painter Washington – Allston about 1840 but it was given its famous statue and revived by T. S. Eliot in an influential essay on Hamlet in the year 1919(1). The formation of this term was perhaps "Eliot's one major contribution toward literature"(2). Eliot writes:

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an objective correlative: in other words, a set of objects, situations, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion, such that when the external facts, which most terminate in sensory experience, are given the emotion is immediately evoked(3).

In order to make objective correlative obvious and functional, poets should create a combination of images, objects or descriptions evoking the appropriate emotion the character tries to express. This cannot be achieved in one particular object, one particular word or one particular image. Instead, the emotion originates in the combination of these phenomena when they appear together.

The problem in this term is that some critics connect it with the emotion of the poet rather than with the persona of the poem. In "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", there have been different critical approaches because "it raises so many issues relating to matters such as history and biography"(4). It is true that friends who knew the young Eliot describe him in Prufrockian terms but this poem was published in the year of Eliot's own first marriage(5). While it is clear that Prufrock will never marry, Eliot, however, has not clarified this problem. He once said of dramatic monologue as the voice of the poet who has put on the custom and make–up either of some historical character or one out of fiction(6). He also said "what every poet starts from is his own emotion, and that he thinks of his own voice(7). This what encourages Cynthia Ozick to say that objective correlative is "suddenly decipherable as no more than a device to shield the poet from the raw shame of confession"(8).

Whoever the speaker of this monologue is, it meant to examine the tortured psyche of the prototypical modern man who is well – educated,
eloquent, neurotic, and emotionally stilted. He is, like many of his kind, alienated and incapable of doing something valuable. He is searching for something to break him from the dull life he is leading. He is looking for a woman who accepts him but he is hesitant and coward because of some physical and psychological problems. Hence, the poem comes to "present a series of metaphors for state of mind"(9).

2. Images as Media for Objective Correlative:

The opening lines of the poem bombard the reader with a series of images which all depict a drab neighborhood and establish the atmosphere of disillusionment and passivity that suffuses the poem. The conceit in which Prufrock compares the evening to "a patient etherized upon a table" breaks the readers expectations for it follows an inviting image of the evening:

\[
\text{Let us go then you and I} \\
\text{When the evening is spread out against the sky} \\
(I.1-2)
\]

It offers "an image of sterility in an urban landscape which seems inimical to human life"(10) Prufrock continues his discontentment with his surroundings:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,} \\
\text{The muttering retreats} \\
\text{Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels} \\
\text{And saw dust restaurants with oyster-shells:} \\
\text{Streets that follow like a tedious argument} \\
\text{Of insidious intent} \\
(I. 4 – 9)
\end{align*}
\]

His supposed journey which is definitely a mental one will not save him from his psychological torture. The streets through which he and his invited companion will pass are half deserted a matter which expresses boredom and dissatisfaction. The retreats that are muttering, nights in restless cheap hotels and the "restaurant with Oyster-shells" to which the streets lead already create a feeling of restlessness and dissatisfaction from Prufrock about life"(11) By interpreting aspects of imagery one can easily assess Prufrock's views of life. His interpretation of every day life can be described as vacant, bleak and repetitive.

As the poem proceeds, Prufrock takes us inside where many women gather in a party. Again the reader's expectation is violently broken for he does not delve into the woman's world. Instead, he depicts
them as they are talking about Michael Angelo, a man whose image disturbs the hesitant Prufrock and reminds him of his lack of productivity:

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michael Angelo (I. 13-14)

As a result, Prufrock escapes from this world and goes out. Again the reader is bombarded with even more imagery that conveys Prufrock’s discontentment with his surroundings. He talks about:

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening. (II. 15-17)

The above aforementioned images which are carried out through personification depict two important facts, concerning Prufrock. The first fact asserts that the women's world from which he has already escaped is foggy and mysterious and it is difficult for the awkward Prufrock to participate in its activities or even to understand it. The second portrays Prufrock as a person who wishes to enter and intermingle in this world despite the fact that he is fully aware of his eternal defeat. He metaphorically stands outside, by the window and uses different senses. As the verbs "rubs", and "licked" show. Then to convince us that what he talks about and describes is but a cat, he inserts an indirect feline image:

Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and felt asleep. (I.18-22)

Finding no use of its lingering attempts, the cat decides to sleep in its natural place after it gains an unfavorable reward represented by full of soot upon its back.

Prufrock does not forget about his already defeat; he still thinks about the world of women which constantly refuses him. This knowledge results from some of his physical defects, a matter which makes him hesitant:

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

Hence, he lays a great deal of importance of what the women inside might say about him and how they have penetrating looks, concerning man's physical qualities. They start from his head, pass
through his arms and descend to his legs which do not show any hint of manhood a matter which women highly appreciate:

[They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!"] (I.45)

After all these disappointments, Prufrock asserts his overall boredom with life. He says:

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

Accordingly, we can infer that Prufrock seems to feel as if his life were over and he has no more to offer. He decides to go out and have a walk upon the beach and listen to the songs of the mermaids who do not sing for him. He wishes to enter in a trance or, in fact, to die:

Till the human voice wake us, and we drown. (I.131)

The first images which depict Prufrock as discontent fed up with his surroundings lead to different images of loneliness and alienation. He realizes his powerlessness and the limitation of his existence. His self-awareness, Erick Fromm argues, has made him feel separate from nature. This causes him pain and sorrow(12). He lives the loneliness. He is as lonely as "those men whom he has watched"(13):

And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows (I.71-72)

He is in the words of Erick Fromm a" modern mass man...isolated and lonely"(14) because he lives in a destructive environment. The half-deserted streets in the first stanza "express the speaker's isolation, and although he tries to find a refuge or retreat in these lonely avenues, they seem to be "muttering" to him as if reminding him of his predicament.(15)

The sense of isolation and alienation, sometimes, is deepened in the poem; especially, when Prufrock meditates the contrast between his needs and the social reality the thing that makes him neurotic if not mad. Frederick L. Rusch argues that "Psyche forces [are] a process of constant interaction between man's needs and the social and historical reality in which he participates". As a result of being alienated, Prufrock depicts three animal images which show his debasement and his wish to "return to the animal state that his race was in before evolving into human beings". The fog / cat seems to be looking in the room that is full of fashionable women who talk about Michael Angelo lingers pathetically outside the house. We can imagine Prufrock "avoiding, yet desiring, physical contact in much the same way". Prufrock uses an image of physical debasement to explore self-pity state; the cat goes down from the window-pane to "the corners of the evenings" and to end its descendence upon "the pools that stand in drains". The images of debasement are
deepened further when Prufrock imagines how he would be examined by others, may be in his imaginary drawing-room, as a specimen insect:

*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,* (I. 56 – 58).

He, as noted by Grover Smith "is a dressing, as if looking into a mirror his whole public personality". (19) As a result he refers to this practice of pinning insect specimens for studying which suggests that he feels similarly scrutinized. Again, Prufrock is extremely self-conscious of his appearance and thinks that people comment on what he wears, and what is important and what he looks like. Then comes the last animal image which is that of a crab where Prufrock further descends to the "floors of silent seas":

*I should have been a pair of ragged claws*  
*Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.* (II. 73 – 74).

What Prufrock wants, in this image, is not to hide himself or his physical weakness from others only. He wants, in fact, death, "physical death, and the poem…, is explicit about this desire." (20) What is worth-mentioning is that the images which debased Prufrock; specially, those of animals are depicted after the hot topic of Michael Angelo, a very creative and intelligent man, all of which Prufrock is not.

At any rate, the whole images in this poem move from the sky and end in the sea; a matter which shows it uncovers "Prufrock's emotional distance from the world as he comes to recognize his second rate status". (21) They also depict a triangle of motion, motionlessness and motion again. The world around Prufrock is in a constant movement, in other words, it is active.

*When the evening is spread out against the sky.* (I. 2)

While Prufrock is motionlessness; he, in contrast to the quick development of his surroundings, is "etherized upon a table":  
*Like a patient etherized upon a table.* (I. 3)

And then he immediately returns to the moving world around him:  
*The muttering retreats* (I. 5).

that restlessly moves. Hence, from the starting lines of the poem Prufrock inserts the images of his discontentment, awkwardness, hesitation, alienation and debasement which can serve as an objective correlative for his emotion which he tries to hide it or at least he does not want to express it openly but through certain devices. Hence, objective correlative becomes a medium to say things indirectly.
2-1- Symbols and Other Devices as Further Media for Objective Correlative.

Symbols represent an important aspect in the system of objective correlative. Jules Laforgue, a French symbolist, believes that "life should be represented in literature through symbolic, and not realistic form" (22). In "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", symbols are employed through certain images which are specific and symbolic in addition to some textual symbols which are purely Eliotian. Eliot knows how to choose some mythical symbols and other symbols which he derives from different cultures and employs them in his text in a clever way that they become part of the text. They are intermingled with the other aspects of his text and become a vehicle to express certain emotion. The physical journey, for instance, suggested by Prufrock to his audience is also a mental journey. The dirty urban streets don not only represent the ugly life of the town; but also a certain life in the speaker's mind. The coffee spoon which "symbolizes the amount of the information appreciation for the real world that these people have "only such a small amount, no more no less". (23)

However, most of the outstanding symbols in this poem are related to sex and the overwhelming question "Can I" is the core of the matter. Prufrock's "inability to feel love has some thing to do with his inability to make love, too…. A simple desire, lust, is more than honest Prufrock can cope with as he mounts the stair". (24) This matter is depicted through the fenile image at the beginning of the poem when Prufrock sees the fog as a cat. Prufrock intendedly uses this image and it seems that his "effeminacy emerges through the cat, as felines generally have feminine associations". (25) The second important symbol of sex is the peach which Prufrock does not dare to eat:

......... Do I dare to eat a peach? (I.122).

A superficial reading of this line may denote that Prufrock is never going to express his passion to a woman whose love he seeks. Prufrock's real problem is related to sex because "the peach, through shape and texture, has long been a symbol for female genitalia". (26) Hence Prufrock's anxiety about eating a peach has much to do with his feeling with sexual inadequacy". (27) Peach, indeed, is a symbol which is, somehow, related to sex in some cultures. It is "the Chinese symbol for the immortality and marriage, as well as for femininity and in particular as a feminine genitalia". (28) It cannot be interpreted in a different way; it is not a haphazard choice chosen by Prufrock. It is not related to the fear of some physical harm (loss of a tooth) its pit may cause or else "Eliot could have chosen any number of pitted fruits if he cared so deeply about his
teeth". However, Eliot's broad education enables him to explore different cultures and writings to find things which are highly suggestive and of much significance for his text. Moreover, as a poet he tries to avoid directness by using certain symbols, whether they are general, private or taken from other cultures rather than his. At any rate, Prufrock's hesitation and shyness are related to his physical inability which results from his aging youth to make love with his woman. Again this can be connected with the lack of productivity which dominates Prufrock's life.

Meditating his physical problem and impotence, Prufrock leads us to the world of another important symbol represented by hair. He has long agonized over his hair; how it is little and thin:

[They will say: "how his hair is growing thin"] (I-41).

Then, he turns his eye to the women's arms:

[But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair:] (I-64)

Though this image is somehow unfavourable for men, yet it indirectly and unconsciously reminds Prufrock of women's abundant hair on their heads. Again the image of the mermaids reminds Prufrock of some by-gone days when he may have been able to challenge women and satisfy their desires. Now, the mermaids are proud of the abundance and colour of their hair:

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown black (I. 126 – 27)

The mermaids are mocking Prufrock's hair which is thin and perhaps a mixture of white and black while they have an abundant flowing red hair, a matter which can symbolize love potential. The abundant and flowing hair was also an attribute to Venus -the goddess of fertility-, her comb, the myth tells, carries "a sexual connotations for the Greeks, as their words for comb, Keteis and Pecten, also signified the female vulva". It is obvious that Prufrock usually runs after certain parts of women's body which remind him of his weakness and impotence. He expresses his emotion through certain symbols which form another system of objective correlative.

In addition to images and symbols, there are some devices which participate in making the objective correlative functional in this poem. The poem opens with a quoted passage from Dante's Inferno, suggesting that Prufrock is one of the damned and that he speaks only because he is sure that no one would return from this place. Furthermore, his poem or what he is going to say about himself is a monologue which takes part inside himself. Through this paratext he regards himself as a damned man whose speech will never be heard by others. Hence he reveals himself openly and depicts his emotion as it is. This technique, however, helps Prufrock introduce his character and speak to those who know this kind
of hell. As the poem progresses, further allusions are introduced. Prufrock alludes to Hamlet in order to convince himself that his mission cannot be carried out in addition to being hesitant and indecisive:

\[ \text{No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be (I. 111)} \]

In this allusion, Prufrock excuses himself for Hamlet was a prince and his mission was great but he acted decisively at last. The allusion to Michael Angelo represented by Prufrock's famous refrain has almost the same function of that of Hamlet. This creative man reminds Prufrock of his inability and weakness. These allusions and few other allusions with the repetition of certain phrases, ideas, and his stickiness in a certain tense express the fragmentation from which Prufrock suffers. The phrase "There will be time" repeated five times between lines 23 and 36 represents his hesitation and delay. He also twice uses the refrain "In the room..." (13 – 14, 35 – 36) and often begins lines with the word "And" (7, 23, 29, 32, 33) in three lines it refers to time:

\[ \text{And indeed there will be time (I. 23)} \]
\[ \text{And time for all the works and days of hands (I. 29)} \]
\[ \text{And for a hundred visions and revisions (I. 32)} \]

The repetitions "have some thing to do with Prufrock's relationship with time".\(^{31}\) They suggest a repetitive inescapable present. This matter takes us back to the "sprawling on a pin" which makes tiny movements. Prufrock seems to be rooted in the present. In his comment on time, Bergson argues that "time is a single, continuous, and flowing duration, rather than a succession of direct steps with distinct tenses".\(^{32}\) Prufrock is incapable of making a decision. He is imprisoned in the present and unaware of the flowing duration that integrates all tenses of time. Inventing different techniques in addition to the existed or traditional ones, Eliot succeeds in showing objective correlative in its different media and functions.
Conclusion

In "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", Eliot uses different images, symbols and other devices as media for the system of objective correlative. He arranges these media in a way that shows Prufrock's emotion towards the society he lives in, his surroundings, his defects and inner life. The poet succeeds in doing so by following a certain poetic technique which is a monologue. Through this technique Eliot makes Prufrock talk about himself openly and reveal his inner feeling concerning himself and things which surround him. He produces a series of images which show much about Prufrock's personality and his view towards life. These images range from discontentment to alienation and debasement and then to death-wish. He also uses some symbols which are, somehow, textual which participate in revealing some other hidden facts about Prufrock's views towards himself where images cannot express them all. These symbols are all connected indirectly to sex. The most disputable ones are "the peach and hair" which play a vital role in showing Prufrock's shyness and impotence. Other devices such as allusions, repetitions and the use of the present tense, explain Prufrock's hesitation, indecision and his motionlessness in a constant mobile world. All these techniques are carried out with the help of the web of the objective correlative.

Notes

5- Mayer, P. 1050.
6- Mayer, P. 1050.
7- Mayer, P. 1050.
8- Renner, P. 1092. 1 of 2.


14- Fromm, P. 225.

15- Lawrence, P. 167.

16- Mayer, P. 1052.

17- McCoy's, P. 266.

18- Renner, P. 2 of 2.


20- Mayer, P. 1052.


24- Mayer, 1051.


26- Renner, P. 2 of 3.

27- Renner, P. 3 of 3.


29- Renner, "Rebutal", P. 3 of 3.

30- Renner, "Major Themes", P. 1 of 3.


32- Renner, P. 4 of 3.
Bibliography


