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Гуидо и Пруфрок: Вътрешен конфликт и разединение

Резюме: Статията разглежда паралела между Гуидо де Монтефелтро от „Песен 27“ на „Ад“ и Пруфрок от „Пруфрок и други наблюдения“ (1917).

В началото правя обзор на срещата между Гуидо и поклонника в осмия кръг на ада. В разговора между двамата персонажи, разкривам причината за неговото грехопадение, посочвам и главния злосторник за мъките му. Докато Гуидо все още се славел като прочут военноначалник и ненадминат стратег, папа Бонифаций V се допитва до него за съвет: как да завоюва Палестрина? По това време Гуидо вече е загърбил греховното си минало като воин и се е отдал на духовно послушание. Осъзнавайки своята греховност, става францисканец, за да може да изкупи греховете си. Опиянен от лукавите обещания за избавление на папата, Гуидо се съгласява да помогне на Бонифаций за неговата военна кампания. Бонифаций обаче мами Гуидо като опрощава греха му преди той да го е извършил.

Анализът разкрива допълнителни аспекти за образа на Гуидо, които водят до неговото грехопадение. Допускам, че освен интелектуално високомерие, надменност и прекомерна увереност в своята хитрина, той е воден от копнеж да използва уменията си на бойното поле за пореден път. Смятам, че именно този негов импулс стои в основата на вътрешен конфликт, който разделя Гуидо на две противоположни страни. От една страна, по време на своето заточение като францисканец, част от Гуидо силно копнее за миналото си на прославен военен стратег. От друга, част от Гуидо проумява необходимостта от покаяние и смирение като начин за опрощаване на греховете му.

Според моите наблюдения, вътрешният конфликт и разединението в Пруфрок е донякъде повлияно от разделения образ на Гуидо. С идеята да проследя как този вътрешен конфликт отеква в Пруфрок съм приложил затворено четене на Елиътовата поема, което разкрива сходна двойственост в самия Пруфрок. Смятам, че от една страна, Пруфрок копнее за величието и безсмъртието на прославените личности, които пленяват съзнанието му (Лазар, Йоан Кръстител и Хамлет). Друга част от Пруфрок обаче проумява, че копнежите му за величие и слава са нереалистични, защото той е шут. Разкъсан между блян за именитост и реалността на неговото съществуване, Пруфрок е раздвоен на две конфликтни страни. Допускам, че подобно на Гуидо, част от Пруфрок също копнее да бъде запомнена, не като незначителна личност (в случая Гуидо, това е като монах), а като именит деятел. В статията насочвам вниманието си към двамата герои, които таят дълбок страх от това – да не умрат в забвение.

Анализът показва, че в случая на Пруфрок този конфликт е не само по-силен, но и по-задълбочен. Това изостряне произлиза от факта, че Пруфрок е пълна противоположност на Гуидо. Смятан за олицетворението на малкия човек на ХХ век, Пруфрок бледнее пред великите личности, към които се стреми.

Авторът, който най-задълбочено анализира връзката между Пруфрок и Гуидо, е Доминик Манганиело. В „Т. С. Елиът и Данте“ той прави паралел между героите като използва епиграфа към „Пруфрок“ за начало. Позовавайки се на епиграфа, Манганиело прави сравнение между Гуидо и Пруфрок, което подчертава споделяното от тях чувство на изолираност и интроспекция. Според Манганиело и двамата герои са измъчвани от огорчение за пропуснати възможности. Вследствие на това, Гуидо и

Пруфрок са в плен на противоборстващите сили на копнеж и отчаяние. Това конфликтно състояние въвежда Пруфрок в диалог със себе си, в който поставя под съмнение мястото си в света.

За разлика от Манганиело, който предлага – че разделението на Пруфрок води до дисоциация между неговите думите и техните значения; този анализ предлага – че дисоциацията в героя на Пруфрок всъщност е разделение, което се поражда в самия характер на Пруфрок. Това води до образуването на два отделни гласа в дискурса на Пруфрок: Пруфрок I – който олицетворява неговите копнежи, и Пруфрок II – който олицетворява силата на неговото отчаяние. Това изследване навлиза по-дълбоко във фините нюанси на характера на Пруфрок, подчертавайки сложното взаимодействие между неговото желание за земна слава и страха му от забвение. Разделението е отразено в структурата на поемата, белязана от промени в тона и перспективата. Понякога Пруфрок говори с увереност и авторитет, сякаш знае точно какво иска и как да го получи. В други моменти обаче е измъчван от съмнения, поставя под въпрос собствената си стойност и се чуди дали е достоен за признание и слава.

Манганиело посочва, че вътрешният конфликт на Пруфрок го тласка към разединение, но той не свързва тази двойственост с образа на Гуидо и не изследва как тя допринася за разделението, пораждащо се в образа на Пруфрок. Вместо това се фокусира върху по-общи съответствия между Пруфрок и други персонажи, като поклонникът и Одисей. За разлика, тази статия предоставя по-цялостен преглед на характера на Гуидо като подчертава вътрешния конфликт, който той преживява. Изследването прави също и връзка между двойственостите – на Гуидо, и тази, присъстваща у Пруфрок, като твърди, че двете се допълват и допринасят за съответствието между стихотворението на Елиът и „Песен 27“.

Друг автор, който обсъжда паралела между Пруфрок и Гуидо, е Фредерик Лок. В „Данте и Пруфрок от Т.С. Елиът“, Лок подчертава ключовата роля на епиграфа в паралела с „Песен 27“. Според Лок функцията на епиграфа е значима, защото цитатът от Данте е продължен от въстъпителните слова на Пруфрок. Лок посочва, че епиграфът ни дава възможност да видим двата героя като допълващи се, защото аналогията е вградена структурно. В своя анализ, Лок прави предложение за присъствието на неизвестното „ти“ в стиха „да тръгваме тогава, аз и ти“ (превод, Левчев). Лок предлага, че неизвестното „ти“ може да се отнася до „алтер егото на Дж. Алфред Пруфрок“ (55). Лок излага следната хипотеза, която той смята, че най-добре обяснява паралела между двамата герои: „тъй както Гуидо е за Данте, така и Пруфрок I е за Пруфрок II“ (55). Лок установява, че Пруфрок участва в дебат със себе си и затова е разделен между Пруфрок I и Пруфрок II, но не успява да свърже вътрешния конфликт на Пруфрок с този на Гуидо в „Песен 27“. Точно заради това, тази статия ще се отклони от наблюденията на Лок по следния начин:

Първо, като предложи, че конфликтът между Пруфрок I и Пруфрок II в поемата на Елиът напомня за конфликта между Гуидо I и Гуидо II в „Песен 27“, което не е обяснено от Лок.

Второ, като измени наблюдението „тъй както Гуидо е за Данте, така и Пруфрок I е за Пруфрок II“ (Лок/Lok 1963: 51) на Гуидо I е за Гуидо II, тъй както Пруфрок I е за Пруфрок II. Като се има предвид тази корекция, все още ще имаме функциониращ паралел, тъй като „ще има, както е в Комедията, един, който разказва историята и един, който слуша“ (Лок/Lok 1963: 56).

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Guido and Prufrock: Internal Conflict and Division

In the epigraph to “Prufrock”, Eliot provides a direct quotation from Dante’s “Inferno”. Eliot’s allusion proceeds from “Inferno XXVII” and evokes the encounter between the pilgrim and Guido da Montefeltro in the eighth ditch of Malebolge. Having made his way through the “ridge’s jagged spurs and rocks” (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVI) the pilgrim observes a vast expanse of “flames that glittered” (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVI). Virgil explains that “within those fires there are souls; / each one is swathed in that which scorches him” (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII). Confined in one of these flames is also Guido, who appears before the pilgrim shortly after Ulysses departs.

Through “the language of the fire” (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII) the damned soul explains that he was once a “man of arms” (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII) who was “approached by Pope Boniface VIII who requested ‘false counsel’ of him (Boniface needed Guido’s knowledge of ‘all wiles and covert ways’ to overthrow Palestrina and thereby advance his own power and possession)” (Daugherty 1984: 38-39). Despite realizing that “to give such counsel would be a mortal sin, Guido hesitates (‘I was silent for his words seemed drunken’) but is finally seduced by Boniface’s sophistic assurances that ‘I have the power to lock and unlock Heaven’ and thereby can ‘absolve thee henceforth’” (Daugherty 1984: 38-39).

Having sensed Guido’s reluctance, “the pope reassures the retired condottiere that he need not fear for his soul” (Barolini 2018, Inferno 27: Disconversion). A clueless Guido does not realize that “at this point Boniface gives false counsel, for he lies, telling Guido da Montefeltro that as pope he has the power to absolve and — here is the lie — that he will absolve Guido of his future sin immediately, from this very moment” (Barolini 2018, Inferno 27: Disconversion). The tragedy of Guido’s actions is that “Boniface of course knows that one cannot be absolved of a sin before committing it. Commission of a sin requires the soul to will and carry out the sin, and it is not possible to will an act and repent of that act simultaneously” (Barolini 2018, Inferno 27: Disconversion). In the end, “it is this simultaneous repenting and willing that is challenged by the devil who arrives to take Guido’s soul to Hell” (Ferrante 2014: 52).

The tragic revelation of Guido’s life, as Ferrante proposes in her study, is that “the great counsellor of fraud is tricked by the master deceiver” (Ferrante 2014: 52). Considering himself cannier than Boniface, Guido abandons the infamy of his religious exile and partakes in the dealings of his former life as a military captain under the pretext of salvation. “Repenting and confessing, I became / a friar; and – poor me – it would have helped” (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII) Guido reveals in “Canto XXVII.” Nonetheless, “like the clever inventor of the brass bull, mentioned in the same canto, who was his machine’s first victim, Guido becomes the victim of his own cleverness” (Ferrante 2014: 52). Similar to how “the inventor did not consider that the cruelty of the tyrant for whom he made the bull might be turned on him, so Guido does not think that a pope who can deceive others on his advice could as easily deceive him” (Ferrante 2014: 52).

The circumstances of Guido’s downfall indicate that his flaw is not solely that he wills to take part in Boniface’s strategy, but that he consents to engage in it while being

exceedingly confident and prideful of his cunning.¹ Guido, then, is not solely the victim of Boniface's cleverness, he is, more importantly, the victim of his own cleverness. Ferrante supports this claim in her study on the "Inferno", by proposing that the true jeopardy of the souls in "Inferno XXVII" is their "intellectual arrogance, pride and excessive confidence in one's cleverness, as Ulysses and Guido da Montefeltro amply illustrate" (Ferrante 2014: 70).

Similar to Dante's depiction of a prideful Ulysses, who appears in the preceding canto, "Guido da Montefeltro also has enormous pride of intellect and accomplishment: 'I knew all the maneuvers and secret ways and practiced them so well that the report reached the ends of the earth,'" (Ferrante 2014: 71) he boasts before the pilgrim. Although, Guido fancied the renown of his life as a military leader "he (...) turns his gifts to the wrong purposes" (Ferrante 2014: 71). Ferrante observes that:

After a successful military career, he retired late in life (at the age when 'one should draw in the sails', he says, showing that he meant to avoid Ulysses' error) to repent his sins in a monastery, but he could not resist the temptation to do once more what he did so well (Ferrante 2014: 71).

Driven by pride "he is so sure of himself that he cannot imagine himself being fooled, and yet, because he is so eager to exercise his ability, he allows himself to be duped and destroyed" (Ferrante 2014: 71).

Even though, "Guido da Montefeltro put great effort into taking the steps that he thought would guarantee his salvation, renouncing his worldly life to become a Franciscan (...) he fails, because his heart did not change" (Barolini 2018, Inferno 27: Disconversion). When Guido tells Dante it was Boniface's fraudulence which cast him back to:

... my former sins, for sending him back to the state he was in before he became a Franciscan, he effectively acknowledges that he did not truly convert. Had he truly converted, had he truly changed his essence, he could not have gone backwards; he could not have returned to his previous self (Barolini 2018, Inferno 27: Disconversion).

It is my contention that the idea of going backward and the prospect of returning to a previous self, offers the possibility of an alternative interpretation of Guido's character which can cast additional light on his fall. To some extent, Barolini implies this in her commentary on Guido's failed conversion.² In Barolini's interpretation of "Inferno XXVII" she writes of a Guido who "[renounced] his earthly life to become a Franciscan" (Barolini 2018, Inferno 27: Disconversion) and a Guido who "did not truly convert" (Barolini 2018, Inferno 27: Disconversion) (i.e. the same Guido who could not resist the temptation to put skills to use once more). What is more, Barolini also speaks of a previous self and a self that did not truly change. Unlike, Barolini, however, who does not consider that an interaction between Guido's two selves can occur, this article identifies that Guido's previous self, engages with, and manipulates, Guido who became a Franciscan. As a result, Guido is split between a life of religious devotion, leading to salvation, but infamy; and a life of military fame, leading to damnation, but promising renown. The interaction between the two sides of Guido's character drafts the presence of an internal conflict, which this article will parallel unto Eliot's Prufrock.

Two distinct echoes comprise Guido's character in "Inferno XXVII" – the deceiver and the deceived. On the one hand, we have the presence of a Guido I, who yearns for his former career as a renowned military captain. Guido, himself, evokes the longing for his prominent military past by declaring:

¹. See Ferrante, p.51, p.70, and p.71.

². See Barolini, "Inferno 27: Disconversion."

The wiles and secret ways – I knew them all /
and so employed their arts that my renown/
had reached the very boundaries of earth
(Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII).

On the other hand, we have the echo of a Guido II, who is concerned with the salvation of his soul. Guido indicates this by declaring:

what once had been my joy was now dejection;
repenting and confessing, I became
a friar;
and – poor me – it would have helped
(Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII).

The initial voice – that of the deceiver – which we perceive in Guido’s exchange with the pilgrim is the echo of Guido I – the part of him that yearns for the fame of his career as a celebrated military tactician and for the opportunity to use skills on the battlefield once more. The sense of overweening pride is noticeable in his exchange with the pilgrim.

The wiles and secret ways – I knew them all
and so employed their arts that my renown
had reached the very boundaries of earth
(Dante, 2018, Inferno XXVII)

he boastfully proclaims the achievement of his past.

Unlike Guido I, who yearns for the renown of his life as a military leader, Guido II acknowledges the need to repent his sins.

What once had been my joy was now dejection;
repenting and confessing, I became
a friar

(Dante, 2018, Inferno XXVII)

he affirms before the pilgrim. Even though a part of Guido’s character believes that he has reached a point in his life where he must “lower sails and gather in their ropes,” (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII) there is a prominent longing for his past that cannot be satisfied with the unsung exile of a Franciscan. Even though, Guido attempts to resist the temptation offered by his other, his discourse “shows that he has not really converted, that he has not really changed his essence” (Barolini 2018, Inferno 27: Disconversion). As Barolini observes in her commentary on “Inferno XXVII,” Guido’s “sinful inclinations were so strong that he was susceptible to temptation” (Barolini 2018, Inferno 27: Disconversion).

Even though there is a notable effort to repent and to abandon the sinfulness of the past, “[Guido’s] conversion was not real, but prudential” (Barolini 2018, Inferno 27: Disconversion) Barolini points out. “In Hell [Guido] is furious at the man who outwitted him and regretful that his brilliant plans to achieve salvation were thwarted. But the issue is not truly Boniface; the issue is what Boniface revealed about Guido” (Barolini 2018, Inferno 27: Disconversion). I believe that the Pope manage to bring to light is the fact that prior to him being susceptible to the temptation which he, as pope posed before him, Guido was susceptible to the temptation which he posed unto himself beforehand. “Boniface could not have compelled him to return to ‘prime colpe,’ had he truly converted and left those sins behind” (Barolini 2018, Inferno 27: Disconversion). Boniface merely offered Guido the opportunity for action, it was ultimately Guido who deceived himself into putting skills renowned skills to use. Had he rejected the deceitful influence of his previous self, as Barolini phrases it, had he rejected his sense of “intellectual arrogance, pride and excessive confidence

in one's cleverness," (Ferrante 2014: 70) and had he "lowered sails and gather in their ropes," (Dante, 2018, Inferno XXXII) his soul would have been saved. Yet, Guido II could not resist the temptation offered by his his previous self" for which reason he fell. Even though a part of Guido longs for salvation, the prospect of withering away in an unsung exile proves to be unbearable.

Most of the critics who examine the parallel between Prufrock and Guido recognize the existence of a correspondence between the two characters. "Something of Guido remains in Prufrock, something of that speaker in Dante's poem gets into the one by Eliot" (Locke 1963: 57) Locke states in his work. As consequence every scholar has interpreted this something differently. One author who analysis the parallel between Prufrock and Guido is Dominique Manganiello. In "T.S. Eliot and Dante", Manganiello draws a parallel between the characters of Guido and Prufrock, using the epigraph to "Prufrock" as a starting point. Manganiello argues that the epigraph, taken from "Inferno 27", is crucial for understanding the correspondence between the two characters. Through the use of the epigraph, Manganiello draws a comparison between Guido and Prufrock that highlights the isolation and introspection that both characters share. Both characters are plagued by regret for missed opportunities and seem to be caught between the conflicting forces of desire and despair. For Prufrock, these conflicting forces lead him to engage in a dialogue of the mind with himself, in which he questions his place in the world and struggles to find a sense of purpose and meaning in his life.

Unlike Manganiello, who proposes that Prufrock's split leads to a disconnect between words and their meanings, this analysis suggests that the split in Prufrock's character is more accurately seen as an actual split which emerges in his character. This split leads to the formation of two distinct voices in Prufrock's discourse: Prufrock I, which symbolizes the forces of desire, and Prufrock II, which symbolizes the forces of despair within him. This study delves deeper into the subtle nuances of Prufrock's character, highlighting the complex interplay between his conflicting desires and emotions for earthly renown and rejection and isolation. This division is reflected in the structure of the poem, which is marked by shifts in tone and perspective. At times, Prufrock speaks with confidence and authority, as if he knows exactly what he wants and how to get it. At other times, however, he is plagued by doubts and hesitations, questioning his own worth and wondering if he is worthy of recognition and renown. Rather than a split between words and meanings, then, this analysis suggests that the split in Prufrock's character is a fundamental aspect of his psychology and shapes his experience of the world. By exploring this division, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of Prufrock's character and appreciate the richness of Eliot's poetry.

Although, Manganiello does note that Prufrock's internal conflict leads him to engage in a dialogue of the mind with the self, he does not explicitly link this duality to Guido's character or explore how it contributes to the division that exists within Prufrock's character. Instead, he focuses on more general correspondences between Prufrock and other literary figures, such as the pilgrim and Ulysses. In contrast, this study provides a more comprehensive overview of Guido's character and highlights the internal conflict that he experiences. This study also draws a connection between Guido's duality and the duality present in Prufrock, arguing that the two are complementary and contribute to the correspondence between Eliot's poem and "Canto 27".

Another author who outlines the parallel between Prufrock and Guido is Frederick W. Locke. In "Dante and T.S. Eliot's Prufrock", Locke stresses the importance of the epigraph in establishing a parallel with "Canto 27", as, according to Locke, "the epigraph is continued by the opening words of the Love Song" (Locke 1963: 55). Locke discerns that the epigraph enables us to see the two characters as complimentary, as the analogy is embedded

structurally. Locke's subsequent remarks attempt to identify the presence of the "you" in the verse "let us go then, you and I". First refutes the notion that "Guido is to Dante as Prufrock is to Dante" (55) as we lack the proper terms for a real analogy. Then he goes on to suggest that "Guido is to Dante, as Prufrock is to you" (56), as in reading "Prufrock" we "come to the poem too suddenly" (57) and thus "we are never truly aware that we are in the poem" (57). Locke later brings forth the proposition that the "you" in the verse "let us go, then you and I" can refer to "the alter ego of J. Alfred Prufrock" (55). Inspired by this remark, he comes up with the following configuration which he believes best explains the parallel between the two characters: "Guido is to Dante, as Prufrock I is to Prufrock II" (55). Although, Locke discerns that Prufrock is engaged in a debate with himself and is thus spilt between a Prufrock I and a Prufrock II, he fails to link Prufrock's internal conflict with that of Guido in "Canto 27". In light of these remark, this article will depart from Locke's observation in the following manner. First, by proposing that the conflict between "Prufrock I and Prufrock II" (Locke 1963: 51) in Eliot's poem is reminiscent of conflict between Guido I and Guido II in "Inferno XXVII" which has not been illuminated in Locke's analysis. Second, by modifying Locke's remark from "Guido is to Dante as Prufrock I is to Prufrock II" (Locke 1963: 51) to Guido I is to Guido II as Prufrock I is to Prufrock II. Given this adjustment we would still have a functioning parallel as "there would be, as in the Commedia, one who tells the story and one who listens" (Locke 1963: 56).

In view of these interpretations this article proposes an alternative reading. I believe that the aforementioned something of Guido's character which reverberates in Prufrock is not only an echo of Guido's internal conflict, but also a resonance of the duality within Guido himself. By drawing upon certain minute details from Eliot's poem, this article will demonstrate how the two echoes which resonate through Prufrock's discourse are reminiscent of the two voices which comprise Guido's account in "Inferno XXVII." What is more, this work will also convey how Prufrock reverberates the internal conflict between that side of Guido which deceives and that side of him which falls victim to deception.

As Eliot's epigraphs are a key source of insight into his poems, critics remark that "many of the epigraphs to Eliot's poems are functional parts of the poems themselves" (Locke 1963: 57). What is more, Locke indicates that Eliot's epigraphs "[are] designed to form an integral part of the effect of the poem; and in the most successful instances a subtle aura of association" (Locke 1963: 57). In view of Locke's proposal, I consider that Eliot's allusion to "Inferno XXVII" more specifically to the pilgrim's exchange with Guido da Montefeltro, does not deviate from this assessment. By providing us with a direct quotation from the *Inferno*, we can assume, under the presumption which Locke offers, that Eliot is not only implying that Dante's Guido is meant to operate like a "functional [part]" (Locke 1963: 57) in Eliot's poem; but that Prufrock is meant to be associated with the former military strategist.

Although Locke gives us the general principle with which to parallel Prufrock with Guido, his commentary only offers a partial glimpse within the complex correspondence between the two characters. In his article, Locke defines the parallel between Prufrock and Guido in two ways. First, he proposes that the interaction between the two characters is drafted by the pilgrim.³ "Guido is to Dante as Prufrock I is to Prufrock II" (Locke 1963: 51) he states in his work. Second, he emphasizes the role of the reader in the parallel⁴, by proposing that "we never really become aware that we are in the poem" (Locke 1963: 58). Although Locke overlooks the internal conflict in Dante's character, he does indicate

³. For a more detailed commentary on the pilgrim's function in Eliot's "Prufrock," refer to Locke's article "Dante and T.S. Eliot."

⁴. For a comprehensive discussion on the reader's function in Eliot's "Prufrock," refer to Locke's article "Dante and T.S. Eliot's Prufrock."

Prufrock's duality. "It has been proposed that the *you* of the verse: 'Let us go then you and I' refers to the alter ego of J. Alfred Prufrock" (Locke 1963: 52) he states in his article. In light of these remark, this article will depart from Locke's observation in the following manner. First, by proposing that the conflict between "Prufrock I and Prufrock II" (Locke 1963: 51) in Eliot's poem is reminiscent of conflict between Guido I and Guido II in "Inferno XXVII". Second, by modifying Locke's remark from "Guido is to Dante as Prufrock I is to Prufrock II" (Locke 1963: 51) to Guido I is to Guido II as Prufrock I is to Prufrock II. Given this adjustment we would still have a functioning parallel as "there would be, as in the *Commedia*, one who tells the story and one who listens" (Locke 1963: 56).

One of the most recognizable contact points between the two characters is manifested in the comparable distress which both Guido and Prufrock share regarding aging. "I grow old ... I grow old ... / I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled" (Eliot 1963) Prufrock declares towards the end of his discourse. Prufrock's aging appearance is discussed in further detail by the women at the gathering, who inform us about "how his hair is growing thin" (Eliot 1963) and about "how his arms and legs are thin" (Eliot 1963). Similarly, Dante's Guido also acknowledges his old age.

I saw myself *come to that part
of life* when it is fitting for all men
to lower sails and gather in their ropes

(Dante, 2018, Inferno XXVII).

Both Dante's Guido and Eliot's Prufrock realize they have reached an age when people are supposed to reconcile their existence and make peace with their lives. Yet, a side of Prufrock's character is unable to settle. Although, Prufrock has

seen the moment of [his] greatness flicker,
and... [has] seen the eternal Footman hold [his] coat, and snicker
(Eliot 1963),

he still believes (or at least a part of him does), that

there is time
for decisions and revisions" (Eliot, 1963).

By acknowledging that the "moment of [his] greatness" (Eliot 1963) is fading away, a side of Prufrock acknowledges that all his prospects of attaining some degree of earthly renown have all but vanished. Recognizing the inevitability of aging, Prufrock declares that he is afraid. Nonetheless, Prufrock is not necessarily afraid of the fact that one day he will die, but is apprehensive of the fact that one day he will pass without having achieved anything in his life. He is horrified that he will not be remembered. Similarly, to an aging Prufrock, an exiled Guido too is unable to reconcile the outcome of his life, as in "Inferno XXVII" he expresses his unwillingness in accepting his joy as a celebrated military tactician as his "dejection" in his life as a Franciscan. Like Prufrock, an exiled Guido too is also afraid. He is afraid that he will not be remembered as "a grand master of the political chess board" (Henry 2022) or a "nobleman and decorated military leader" (Henry 2022) but as a simple friar.

That Eliot's Prufrock is distressed by the meaninglessness of his life, whereas Dante's Guido is apprehensive about his legacy, illustrates one of the primary differences in the parallel between the two characters. Guido is not worried about his life lacking meaning, at least not in the same sense as Prufrock is troubled by the pointlessness of his; as unlike Prufrock, Guido has a lifetime of celebrated achievements in his distinguished career as a military strategist behind him. In contrast to Guido, Prufrock has nothing. All his life he has been nothing more than "an attendant lord," (Eliot 1963) who is "a bit obtuse" (Eliot 1963).

Now that his has grown old, he even views himself “at times, indeed, almost ridiculous — / almost, at times, the Fool” (Eliot 1963).

Prufrock’s subordinate existence further distances him from Dante’s character, as Guido is a celebrated military tactician, whose reputation was widely known, while Prufrock is an “attendant lord” (Eliot 1963), whose nondescript presence and demeanor fails to attract attention even during afternoon tea. Prufrock is invisible to those around him as he functions as the “the antitype” (Manganiello 1989: 18) of Dante’s character. “Epic and biblical figures will serve Dante as models; Prufrock who pales in comparison to Guido, sees himself a caricature” (Manganiello 1989: 21). Since Prufrock’s life dramatically differs from the “meaningful lives” (Colas 2006) of the figures he aspires to, his life becomes representative of “the modern unheroic hero” (Manganiello 1989: 21) who is “lost through devious weakness instead of hubris” (Manganiello 1989: 20). The discrepancy between the lives of the distinguished figures and Prufrock’s own meaninglessness is indicated by Eliot.

The women in the poem talk of Michelangelo, a genius whose varied masterpieces have earned him immortality (Colas 2006).

The fact that “these women do not notice Prufrock, although he is alive and present” (Colas 2006) shows how invisible Prufrock really is.

Prufrock’s overlooked presence during the gathering further distances him from the “epic and biblical figures” (Manganiello 1989: 21) he aspires to, as Prufrock embodies the “little man of the Twentieth Century” (Zhu’ai Sian 2014: 1). In the course of the event, Eliot “reveals that Prufrock’s life is not a heroic epic” (Manganiello 1989: 21). A side of Prufrock conveys this by affirming that “his ‘days and ways’ are only ‘butt-ends,’ like wasted cigarettes” (Colas 2006). What is more, “Prufrock admits that he has ‘measured out my life with coffee spoons,’ implying that in his small world, tea parties are his only sort of entertainment” (Colas 2006) and, I would like to add, his only lifetime achievement. This imbalance becomes even more dramatic when considered in relation to Dante’s character. Whereas Guido’s renown on the battlefield had earned him recognition throughout the world, Prufrock’s insignificance fails to attract attention even at a tea party (Colas 2006). Whereas the achievements of Guido’s life are measured by his knowledge of the “wiles and secret ways” (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII) the achievements of Prufrock’s life are measured by the number of tea parties he has attended and the amount of butt-ends present in the ashtray. In Prufrock’s insignificant existence these trivialities are what constitute “[his] days and ways” (Eliot 1963).

Realizing the irrelevance of his existence, a part of Prufrock perceives the impossibility of obtaining renown at his age. Prufrock indicates this by saying:

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 1963).

Even though “Prufrock does not see himself as a worthwhile individual” (Colas 2006) he longs to “sound [as] important” (Colas 2006) as the individuals he repeatedly evokes. The unfeasibility of earning recognition is indicated by Eliot, as the lives of the distinguished individuals which Prufrock aspires to are “those of the lion” (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII) as Guido points out in “Inferno XXVII”. In contrast, Prufrock’s own existence is compared to “a pair of ragged claws / scuttling across the floors of silent seas” (Eliot 1963). This remark is significant, as it illustrates Prufrock’s inferiority. The fact that Prufrock compares himself to “a pair of rugged claws” (Eliot 1963) indicates, as Lee proposes in her study, that he perceives of himself as a “crustacean” (Zhu’ai Sian 2014: 3) This comparison is significant as it further

strengthens Prufrock's nondescript character. Like the "crustacean" with which Eliot's character is associated, Prufrock dwells in seclusion. The dramatic contrast between the lion-heartedness of the epic figures and Prufrock's own crustacean-like existence further exemplifies the hopelessness of Prufrock's ambitions.

A devastated Prufrock thus realizes that he has not achieved anything of significance or worth with which to attract the attention of the guests. Considering his life in retrospect, Prufrock understands that he has wasted his existence.

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, 1963)

he declares. While Guido can look back and resolve the fact that he can "lower sails and gather in the ropes" (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII) as a fitting end to a distinguished career full of eminent achievements, Prufrock cannot. When Prufrock "turns back [and] descends the stair" (Eliot 1963) of his past, all that he can perceive is a life in which he was only one of the "lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows" (Eliot 1963) whose legacies will be consumed by "silent seas" (Eliot 1963). The usage of the word "silent" is of particular importance for the radical discrepancy between the two characters, as the life of one will be a renowned tale around the world, while the life of the other will be an insignificant ripple in the sea.

Confronted with the reality of his own existence for the very first time Prufrock is paralyzed with indecisiveness. "And should I then presume? / And how should I begin?" (Eliot 1963) he repeatedly asks. Even the most mundane of activities begin to overwhelm and incapacitate him. "Shall I part my hair behind? / Do I dare to eat a peach?" (Eliot 1963) Unable to act nor think, Prufrock tragically cries out: "That is not what I meant at all; / That is not it, at all" (Eliot 1963). Interesting enough, in "Inferno XXVII", Guido too displays indecision which, it seems to me, Eliot not only builds upon but further amplifies. Barolini observes that when Boniface comes to Guido for council he *hesitates*, (Barolini 2018, Inferno 27: Disconversion) as he "[knows] that to give such counsel would be a mortal sin" (Barolini 2018, Inferno 27: Disconversion). Even though, Guido holds his tongue – "I was silent" (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII – as Boniface's "words (...) seemed to me delirious" (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII) he quickly overcomes his indecisiveness by saying: "my silence seemed a worse offense than speech" (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII). In contrast, Eliot portrays Prufrock as being hesitant throughout his life. "'Do I dare?' and 'Do I dare,'" (Eliot 1963) Prufrock questions during his discourse. The reiterating echo of queries such as: "Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?" (Eliot 1963) add a further note to the hesitancy of Eliot's character, who is paralyzed by inertia. As a result, the two characters drift away from another, as Guido resolves Prufrock's indecisiveness in a heartbeat, whereas Prufrock struggles with it throughout his life.

Similar to Guido, however, who during his unglorified exile as a Franciscan sought a prospect to escape the anonymity of his religious exile, so too does a side of Prufrock yearn to overcome the insignificance of his existence; as Prufrock, like Dante's Guido, too "pines for a worldly fame" (Manganiello 1989: 21) in his life of anonymity. Compelled by the prospect of unrecognition, a side of Prufrock's character is unwilling to reconcile the irrelevance of his existence. Despite his "bit obtuse" (Eliot 1963) but "full of high sentence" (Eliot 1963) life, Prufrock yearns (or at least a side of him does) to be commemorated like Michelangelo, Hamlet, John the Baptist, Lazarus, and even Dante's Guido. Even though a side of Prufrock realizes that he is too far gone, another part of him reassures him that "there will be time to... create" (Eliot 1963). Similarly, a part of Guido is also unable to settle with the prospect of being forgotten. As a Franciscan, Guido yearns to escape the anonymity of his exile by

“[doing] once more what he did so well” (Ferrante 2014: 71) thus returning to the time when “[his] renown / had reached the very boundaries of earth” (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII).

It is due to the prospect of unrecognition that a fissure emerges in Prufrock’s character as it does in Guido’s. This proposition is supported by Mayer, who observes that both Dante and Eliot are experimenting with the idea that “an emotional experience can be so intense as to split one’s personality” (Mayer 2011: 185). I believe that in the case of Guido that predicament is to “lower sails and gather in their ropes” (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII) or “to do once more what he did so well” (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII). In the case of Prufrock that is the dilemma to “turn back and descend the stair” (Eliot 1963) or to “force the moment to its crisis” (Eliot 1963). Manganiello also observes a division in the two character by noting that “Prufrock [is engaged] in a dialogue of the mind with the self” (Manganiello 1989: 19). What Manganiello overlooks in his commentary, however, is that “the symbolic landscape [which] is limited to the narrator’s mind” (Manganiello 1989: 19) is evocative of Guido’s own “dialogue of the mind with the self” (Manganiello 1989: 19) in “Inferno XXVII” and not of the parallel “between author and character” (Manganiello 1989: 19).

When confronted with the impossibility of his desires, a side of Prufrock understands that his life will be an unsung tale of insecurity – “To wonder, ‘Do I dare?’ and, ‘Do I dare?’” (Eliot 1963) – of self-doubt – “Do I dare / Disturb the universe?” (Eliot 1963) – and of indecision –

So how should I presume?
 (...) And how should I presume?
 (...) And should I then presume?
 And how should I begin? (Eliot 1963).

More importantly, a part of Prufrock understands that his life will be one of unrecognition – “I have heard the mermaids sing each to each/ I do not think that they will sing to me” (Eliot 1963). Even so, another side of Prufrock is unwilling to reconcile the irrelevance of his existence, similar as to how a side of Guido is unwilling to settle with the prospect of an unglorified life. Nonetheless, when “the human voices” (Eliot 1963) at the party remind Prufrock of his unimportance and of his unheroic demeanor –

They will say: ‘How his hair is growing thin!’
 They will say: ‘But how his arms and legs are thin!’ (Eliot 1963),

a devastated Prufrock has no other alternative than self-deception as a means to ascribe himself with some degree of imaginary authority.

Eliot indicates that Prufrock has nothing to boast about. He appears to be the embodiment of “the little man”⁵ who is not quite the heroic prototype of bravery, and not likely the ideal candidate worth exultation.⁶ There is, nonetheless, a prominent yearning in him to be something much more than he really is. “I am Lazarus, come from the dead, / come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all” (Eliot 1963) a part of Prufrock envisions in an attempt to “sound [as] important” (Manganiello 1989: 21) as the distinguished individuals he repeatedly evokes.

Despite acknowledging that time is not on his side – “I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker” (Eliot 1963) – and that he is alarmed by the meaningless of his life – “and in short I was afraid” (Eliot 1963) – Prufrock wants to believe that “indeed there will be time” (Eliot 1963) for him to obtain recognition. Driven by the prospect of anonymity, he deceives himself into thinking that “indeed there will be time” (Eliot 1963) for his renown to “reach the very boundaries of the earth” (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII).

⁵. See Lee, 3.

⁶. See Lee, 1.

Even though a part of Prufrock realizes that he is too far gone – “I grow old... I grow old...” (Eliot 1963) – and that he perceives that he is too enfeebled – “They will say: ‘How his hair is growing thin!’ (...) They will say: ‘But how his arms and legs are thin!’” (Eliot 1963) – another part of Prufrock actively fuels Prufrock’s ambitions for renown. “There will be time, there will be time / to prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet” (Eliot 1963) a side of Prufrock deceptively reassures his other. “There will be time to murder and create, / and time for all the works and days of hands” (Eliot 1963) he continues.

I believe that the two echoes which comprise Prufrock are reminiscent of the two voices which comprise Guido’s character. As is the case with Guido, a side of Prufrock functions as a deceiver and another behaves as the deceived. In “Inferno XXVII” Dante indicates that the side of Guido’s character which functions as the deceiver still “pines for a worldly fame” (Manganiello 1989: 21) in his unglorified exile. Similarly, the part of Prufrock’s character which functions as the deceiver in Eliot’s poem too “pines for a worldly fame” (Manganiello 1989: 21) in his life of anonymity. This is illustrated by Prufrock’s active attempt to “sound [as] important” (Manganiello 1989: 21) as the “epic and biblical figures” (Manganiello 1989: 21) he evokes. As consequence, just as Guido quickly falls victim to the deception offered by his other, so too does Prufrock hastily succumbs to the fallacy offered by his, as both characters are driven by a desire to overcome anonymity.

The interaction between the voice of the deceiver and of the deceived in Prufrock’s discourse is drafted in the following way. When Prufrock reassures his other that “there will be time,” (Eliot, 1963) another voice affirms his deception by saying “and indeed there will be time” (Eliot 1963). The reiteration of the same line is important, as it indicates the presence of another voice in Prufrock’s discourse. When we look closely, we can perceive that the line is not duplicated but is repeated with a slight variation. It is my contention that this is significant, as with the addition of the conjunction ‘and’ Prufrock’s second voice can asserts its presence.

Given this remark, let us return to Prufrock’s discourse. At the onset of Eliot’s poem, the deceiver declares that “there will be time / to prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet” (Eliot 1963). What is more, he also affirms that “there will be time to murder and create, / and time for all the works and days of hands” (Eliot 1963) manipulating his other into some prospect of time for achieving recognition. As though persuaded by this promise, the deceived side of Prufrock’s character concedes with this assurance. Having been manipulated the deceived side of Prufrock’s character now begins to claim that: “and indeed there will be time / to wonder, ‘Do I dare?’ and, ‘Do I dare?’” (Eliot 1963) Envisioning this fallacy as a reality, Prufrock begins to think that there really is time for him to cease being “an attendant lord” (Eliot 1963) and “the fool” (Eliot 1963). With the imaginary prospect of time by his side, Prufrock envisions the possibility of being equal to the “epic and biblical figures” (Manganiello 1989: 21) he aspires to. “I am Lazarus, come from the dead, / come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all” (Eliot 1963) he foolishly foresees.

After the deceiver makes this assertion, he further continues his manipulation by saying:

For I have known them all already, known them all:
have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons (Eliot, 1963).

As is the case with the previous example, the deceived side of Prufrock’s character envisions this falsehood as another truth and declares:

*And I have known the eyes already, known them all –
the eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase (Eliot 1963).*

He further becomes engrossed by the deception offer by his other by declaring:

*And I have known the arms already, known them all –
arms that are bracelet and white and bare (Eliot 1963).*

Again, the pronoun ‘*and*’ is significant, as it indicates the presence of a second echo. Similar to the previous example, the function of the pronoun is to indicate that the deceived side of Prufrock too begins to share the same vision which his other offers. When the voice of the deceiver affirms that “I have known them all already” (Eliot 1963), offering his other with some prospect of authority, the deceived side of Prufrock indicates that he too “has known them all already” (Eliot, 1963), as in indicated by the pronoun.

In reality Prufrock does not possess the capacity to support the daring assertions that he makes. This is illustrated by the fact that a part of him considers himself “an attendant lord” (Eliot 1963) and “the fool” (Eliot 1963). The only knowledge that he seemingly has is the realization that he is growing old and feeble and that his life is deprived of not only meaning and purpose, but of commemoration. Yet, because the prospect of obtaining some degree of authority in his unglorified life (even if it is within the confines of his imagination) appears overly enticing, he quickly becomes infatuated with the deception which his other offers. What is more, it is because this fallacy allows Prufrock to cease being “the little man” (Zhu’ai Sian 2014: 1) but an individual worthy of the “aspiration to become an exceptional person” (Zhu’ai Sian 2014: 1) like the distinguished individuals he repeatedly evokes, that he so quickly succumbs to the deception of his other. The deceived side of Prufrock’s character demonstrates the peak of his deception by saying:

I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all (Eliot 1963)

by means of which he reverberates Guido’s “intellectual arrogance, pride and excessive confidence in one’s cleverness” (Ferrante 2014: 70).

Even though Prufrock complements Dante’s character in this respect, he also departs from him. The main difference in their parallel is outlined by the instance in which they become aware of their deception. Despite the fact that both characters become conscious of their deception, they do so in two different ways. I believe that Prufrock becomes aware of the fallacy offered by his other while he is alive. This is indicated by the “human voices [which] wakes us, and we drown” (Eliot 1963). Guido, on the other hand, becomes conscious of his deception only after he is dead. This is indicated by the echoes of the “black cherub” (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII) who leave Guido “lost” (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII) and “in bitterness” (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII) in the eight ditch of Malebolge. It is only when Guido is plunged “down among [the] menials” (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII) that he begins to understand the falsehood of his life. In “Inferno XXVII” he realizes that despite “[putting] great effort into taking the steps that he thought would guarantee his salvation, renouncing his worldly life to become a Franciscan (...) he fails, because his heart did not change” (Barolini 2018, Inferno 27: Disconversion).

It seems to me that Guido’s descend into Hell is also evoked by Eliot. In “Prufrock” Eliot’s character symbolically “drowns” (Eliot 1963) thus echoing the fate of the military captain. “He must come down among my menials” (Dante 2018, Inferno XXVII) Francis declares as he carries Guido down to Hell. Prufrock’s figurative drowning can be seen as a reflection of Guido’s descend into Hell which marks the moment in which both characters become aware of their fallacy.

For Guido’s character arc, Hell is the decisive factor in his revelation. For it is only when death strips him from the deception of the “intellectual arrogance, pride and excessive confidence in one’s cleverness” (Ferrante 2014: 70) of his previous self that he is able to truly understand the truth about himself. In contrast to Dante’s character, Eliot’s Prufrock becomes

aware of the falsehood of his thoughts when he is alive. I believe that this is indicated by the “human voices” (Eliot 1963) which bring about Prufrock’s revelation. The fact that these voices are of this world and not of hell, indicates that Prufrock’s revelation occurs on earth. Even though Prufrock – the deceiver – actively manipulates his other into thinking that there will be time for him to create a name for himself. In spite of the fact that he persuades his other into thinking that he too “knows them all” (Eliot 1963) in an effort to envision an imaginary prospect of authority, he fails, as the deceived side of Prufrock’s character becomes mindful of the delusions with which he is presented. I consider that Prufrock’s revelation arises from the earthly echoes which remind him that “his hair is growing thin” (Eliot 1963) and that “his arms and legs are growing thin” (Eliot 1963) which ultimately drown Prufrock’s illusion.

Becoming once more conscious of his insignificance, Prufrock begins to see through the absurdity of his deceptive other. This, I believe, is illustrated in the following way. When the deceitful part of Prufrock attempts to further fuel his illusion by saying: “Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter” (Eliot 1963) the deceived side of Prufrock’s character unwaveringly declares that: “I am no prophet — and here’s no great matter” (Eliot 1963). The fact that Prufrock II disregards this manipulation indicates that a dramatic turnaround in their exchange has occurred. Even though Prufrock has succumbed to the deception offered by his other, now he is yet again conscious of his insignificance and of being “a caricature” (Ferrante 2014: 70) of the distinguished individuals he repeatedly evokes. Instead of being enticed by the prospect of distinction as before, he regains his sense of truth by affirming the reality of his wasted life.

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 1963)

he bitterly declares.

Prufrock II quickly offers another deception. By attempting to persuade his other into believing that he is “Lazarus, come from the dead,” (Eliot 1963) Prufrock I once more attempts to fuel his fantasy of being “an exceptional person” (Zhu’ai Sian 2014: 1). Even though the deceitful side of Prufrock attempts to entice his other, the deceived side of Prufrock remains indifferent to this manipulation. The fact that he refutes the claim made by his other, by saying:

That is not what I meant at all;
that is not it, at all (Eliot 1963)

indicates his return to reality.

In a final attempt to manipulate his other, the deceived side of Prufrock’s character attempts to ascribe himself with the renown of Shakespeare’s Hamlet. As if devastated by this absurd proposal, the deceived part of Prufrock’s character cries out in a final feat of bitterness and anguish:

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
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, 1963).

I believe that by finally accepting his role as “an attendant lord” (Eliot 1963) and the “the fool,” (Eliot 1963) Prufrock realizes that he “was [not] mean to be” (Manganiello 1989: 21) as prominent as the “epic and biblical figures” (Manganiello 1989: 21) he aspires to, thus resolving his internal conflict and overcoming his delusion. After understanding that the essence of his existence has been drafted by “[starting] a scene or two” (Eliot 1963) and being “an easy tool” (Eliot 1963) Prufrock settles with unrecognition as the only possible outcome for his “bit obtuse” (Eliot 1963) but “full of high sentence” (Eliot 1963) subordinate role in life. In contrast, it is because an exiled Guido cannot settle with being unglorified like Prufrock, he falls.

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