Love Song Of J Alfred Prufrock – Analysis Essay, Research Paper

“The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock” has some incredible and magical imagery, yet the individual images are not the guiding force or theme of the poem. The theme of the poem is Prufrock, split between two worlds, between a world of beauty and art, and one clear, cold, and calculated, “measured out? with coffeespoons,” and his indecision to reveal this split to another person. He begins by describing an evening, “like a patient etherized upon a table.” This is his way of pointing out the beauty in the sky, with its millions of stars and special things, it really is quite tremendous but it’s something we’re used to, hence we’ve learnt to take it for granted. We’re “etherized” to its beauty; to us it is something banal and unimpressive. He goes on to mention the twisting streets, this represents his indecision, over which road to take and what impact the “road” will have on his life later on. There are so many options leading up to the overwhelming question: whether he will bare his soul to another person and risk being judged? Prufrock even goes so far as to compare himself to Shakespeare’s Hamlet, renowned for his indecision, and also Polonious, too cautious and forever politic, always weighing things in his mind and never acting on impulse. Breaking from his reverie, Prufrock abruptly switches to his other world, of things measured out with coffeespoons. He mentions ladies, at their tea parties, talking of Michelangelo, a subject so deep that it begs a discussion more serious than that of the chatter at ladies’ tea parties. But the women just come and go, discussing the great artist only superficially, and Prufrock addresses the ladies with an air almost of biting sarcasm. Prufrock then decides to switch back to this other, more beautiful world, and he describes the fog rubbing up against the windowpanes. He describes the fog almost as if it were an animal; personifying it and giving even it some sense of feline beauty. I’m not sure, but I think the fog also might represent Prufrock’s causes for indecision, he describes the fog almost as a predatory animal, and perhaps he fears that should he make a mistake in telling someone else about what he thinks, they might attack him for his inane views. In the final verses of the poem, he even states to the reader, about what he fears the potential response might be. He again mentions the coffeespoons, which symbolize the amount of information and appreciation for the real world that these people have: only such a small amount, no more, no less. They seems to have little interest in discussing further the true essence of any subject, and they only want what will superficially please them, as with Michelangelo. They have no desire to pursue the grander meaning of it all, and he implies that their vie of life is sharply distorted because of their superficial interest. He does not mean to be a hypocrite, he has no illusions of himself nor does he claim to have them. In fact he often expresses discontent with himself in the poem for his indecision, and even considers the probability that he might very well die without having ever told anyone. He tackles mortality, an intrinsically complex subject and one that invites a lot more contemplation from Prufrock, with straightforward honesty: “I grow old? I grow old? ” He then goes directly into comparing such a large and deep subject with vanity, a superficial little remnant of the world of coffeespoons- he agonizes over whether to part his hair on one side to cover his baldness, or eating a peach. If he questions such little actions, is he really ready to “disturb the universe?” Throughout the poem, there is some very compelling imagery that by itself provide a beautiful narrative. However, it is more the accumulation of the images that really sets the guiding force and theme of the poem.