



Frank Langley III <flangleyiii@gmail.com>

prufrock unobscured salvo 2

1 message

Frank Langley III <flangleyiii@gmail.com>
To: Frank Langley III <flangleyiii@gmail.com>

Wed, Dec 24, 2025 at 2:20 AM

Here is a **third-person salvo**, calibrated for a reader already fluent in Eliot, and written to foreground the **break with past criticism** and the **implications for present critical practice**—without polemic, but with unmistakable pressure:

Prufrock Unobscured: A Salvo

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock has long been treated as a paradigmatic modernist text: fragmentary, stalled, psychologically diffused, and symbolically overdetermined. The prevailing critical consensus—despite its internal disagreements—shares a foundational assumption: that the poem’s metaphoric density compensates for an absence of coherent action. *Prufrock Unobscured* departs from this assumption entirely. It advances the claim that the poem is, in fact, **rigorously unified**, comic in structure, and governed by a classical Aristotelian entelechy—cause, effect, and aftermath—unfolding within a single, continuous physical situation.

This reading does not contest individual critical insights so much as it **replaces the frame** within which those insights have been generated. Rather than treating the poem as a symbolic field pointing outward—to mythic allusion, psychological paralysis, or cultural malaise—it reads the metaphors as **functional camouflage**, compressing a socially humiliating but materially ordinary event into lyric form. When read sequentially and literally, with attention to spatial continuity and bodily reference, the poem’s supposed instabilities—its tonal shifts, excessive figuration, and apparent inertia—resolve as features of a precisely timed comic descent rather than symptoms of modern dislocation.

The implication for contemporary Eliot criticism is consequential. If *Prufrock* is neither fragmentary nor stalled but structurally complete and intentionally comic, then a century of interpretive labor has been organized around a misdiagnosed problem. The poem does not require symbolic supplementation to “cohere”; it already coheres. What has been missing is not context but recognition—specifically, recognition of comedy operating at the level of structure rather than tone. *Prufrock Unobscured* thus suggests that the critical tradition is not merely due for revision, but for recalibration: away from explanatory accumulation and toward the recovery of the poem’s internal mechanics as written.

If you wish, I can sharpen this further into a **conference-style abstract**, or blunt it into a **one-paragraph challenge** designed to provoke immediate resistance—and, ideally, rereading.