

Twentieth-Century Fiction
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Lecture - 15
Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock - Part 1

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The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

T.S. Eliot

(Published originally in his book Prufrock and Other Observations, 1917)

*S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse
A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.
Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo
Non torno vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.*

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question...
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
...



So, hello and welcome to this NPTEL course entitled Twentieth Century Fiction, where we start with a new text today having finished Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness. So, a new text today which we will start with is The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock by T S Eliot. And as some of you know this is part of the bigger collection of poems that Eliot published in 1917 called Prufrock and other observations which should be on your screen at the moment.

Now before I dive into the text, just give you a very brief background or the context which produces poem, in the sense that you know this is a very modernist poem. And it is important for us to know that Eliot is obviously, coming to this poem from a certain tradition of writing; and that the chief tradition that he is appropriating over here is a French symbolist tradition.

So, the influence of Mallarme, the influence of Baudelaire, the influence of all the French symbolist poets are very heavily present in Eliot's early poetry. And those of you

are interested in Eliot would know that, his poetry can be broadly divided into two different kinds; almost at two different qualities different genres of poetry.

So, his early poetry is very symbolic, is very urban is very cinematic; we talk about a cinematic quality the visual cinematic quality in this particular poem as well. And it is full of velocity and brokenness and fragmentation and very urban, very metropolitan; it contains the metropolitan madness and neurosis and also the metropolitan mysticism that you get a moment of epiphany in certain very mundane conditions, how is epiphany produced, generated and experienced in a very mundane metropolitan condition.

So, Eliot's early poetry is full of those urban elements, urban pointers. Now if you take a look at his later poetry post-Wasteland and we will look at wasteland as well in this particular course we will study that as a text. If you take a look at his later poems, let us say the four quartets you know; I mean that kind of poetry is very spiritual, is almost mystical, it is very far moved from this metropolitan velocity and madness and fragmentation, rather it is the poetry of reconciliation of you know a very passive spiritual surrender.

And that has something to do with Eliot's personal orientation as a man as well, because you know some of you would know he was converted into Roman Catholicism, he became a catholic his later life. So, his later poetry is very much part of the catholic tradition of poetry and very religious and very spiritual; but this particular poem The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock is one of the most famous poems Eliot ever wrote.

One of the most one of those poems that he is most known for. It is full of these metropolitan pointers; it is very visual, it is very cinematic, is very broken, is very fragmented and is very neurotic as well and this neurosis is a very big element in Eliot's early poetry for that matter in much of modernist narratives.

We saw like for instance we just finished Heart of Darkness which was Conrad and we saw how this very interesting relationship to be made there between neurosis and narrative, and how Marlow's narrative is informed by his neurosis. And so, it is part of the neurotic problem as well that, the fact that he cannot really deliver his story and put that into narrative right that becomes a problem for Marlow.

Now, a similar kind of problem happens in Eliot's early poetry as well especially in this particular poem; the speaker J. Alfred Prufrock is a middle aged presumably bourgeois man who wants to frequent very upper class social circles; but he cannot really bring, he cannot really get along with his story, he cannot really tell the story and at some point he will tell you, it is impossible to say just what I mean, it becomes a line in this particular poem.

And again, this inability or the impossibility to just say what you mean is very much part of the modernist tradition. And you know if you take a look at the broader you know scenario over here; what is happening is the poets and writers are becoming increasingly aware of the inadequacy of language. In other words, the entire grammar of classic realism, the entire instrument, the entire machinery of classic realism is breaking up in modernism; and they are looking for a different kind of expression, a different sort of vectors of expression which were more befitting in the emotional complexity.

In other words, we do not really have the linguistic machinery to deliver the emotional entanglement and that is part of the modernist problem. And the problem modernist literature and what gets foregrounded over and over again is this inability to convey the emotional entanglement in a particular linguistic machinery, right. So, even here in J. Alfred Prufrock The Love Song, you will find; it is not really a love song at all, it is an anti-love song. So, in that sense it is a deconstruction of the love song; the typical idyllic love song has been deconstructed over here.

But the more important issue at hand is the inability to find the right language for your emotional expression. So, the complexity of the emotional expression, the complexity of the human brain and the inadequacy of the artificial machinery of language to convey the complexity, the complex sensations of the human brain, that becomes a big part of the modernist problem. And as a result of which we have some other techniques such as defamiliarization which we saw on Conrad; we have stream of consciousness which we see in rampantly in Joyce's Ulysses, which we will study in this course and also Mrs. Dalloway by Virginia Woolf. So, that becomes a very big meta issue, so to say in modernism and that is something which we have to bear in mind.

So, this is a poem about fragmentation about the metropolitan alienation, is an alienation of man in a massive metropolis; the human subject is being isolated and completely

alienated in a massive metropolis and that becomes a huge problem and that; obviously, becomes very existential in quality, very quickly it becomes existential in quality, right. And that you know all this becomes part of the crisis in this particular poem.

So, the crisis is one of social crisis, he wants to mingle in a particular social circle which does not respect him, which does not receive him warmly; it disparages him, it makes jibes at him at his appearance. The problem is also linguistic, he does not find the right language to express himself and the problem ultimately becomes very existential. So, it is a social alienation, it is a linguistic alienation, it is an existential alienation which is basically what this poem is all about, right.

And also, this poem is about procrastination, it is about getting on to do something, but not really finishing it. The entire poem is about let us go, let us go and get in the circle, let us go and make the visit, let us go and talk to someone, let us go and speak to someone, let us go and mingle in certain circle; but that visit is never materialized, that visit is never finished that visit is never done.

So, this half-done quality, this undone quality in Eliot's early poetry something which is very important for us to understand and again that becomes a large part the metropolitan problem. And it is about metropolitan madness, it is about velocity, it is about fragmentation, it is about alienation and it is also about procrastination, it is about not getting things done, it is about not finishing things, right.

And this not finishing things it becomes a very important issue in Eliot's early poetry and this is something which we will look at very closely as well, there is an inertia quality about it as well, ok. Now before we begin this poem there is a little epigram right at the beginning which actually I looked up for the first time today before I came to teach you. I did not actually know what is this from; I always saw it, but I did not quite know what this was about. This is actually from Dante's *Inferno* and this is about a speaker in Dante's *Inferno* who is telling you that; you know I would speak, but no one would believe me. So, you know that is a there is a reason why I become this you know, I come back from the dead; but no one would listen to what I am saying, no one would believe what I am saying and as a result of which that gives me a sense of freedom, right.

So, this line in Italian actually, this is from Dante's *Inferno*, this is what it translates into an English; the fact that the speaker is telling you that you know I can tell you different

things, I can tell you the horror images, the horror experiences that I have experienced in inferno, but no one is going to believe me, no one will listen to me, right. And that gives me a sense of freedom, that gives me a sense of emancipation that gives me some sense of agency, ok.

So, that is a very important quotation an epigram with which this poem begins. And as you can see Eliot is very clearly situating himself apropos of that Eurocentric tradition of writing; this European tradition of writing. And we see that more rampantly in *Wasteland* which is full of allusions from Spenser's *Faerie Queene* from Dante's *Inferno* from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*; it is full of different kinds of references to different kinds of European traditions of writing. And Eliot is very much becoming a part of that European tradition.

And again, this importance is worthwhile actually to bear in mind Eliot's personal proclivities over here; he is an American, he came to Britain from America. He is actually born in America, but he was very much trying, he is very hard you know he was trying very hard to appropriate the European British tradition of writing and that becomes that shows quite clearly in his poetry as well, ok. So, let us dive into the poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* by T S Eliot and this is how it begins. So, I just read off the first stanza and then we will start talking about it and some details.

Let us go then you and I when the evening is spread out against the sky like a patient etherized upon a table; let us go, through certain half deserted streets the muttering retreats of restless nights in one night cheap hotels and sawdust restaurants with oyster shells. Streets that follow like a tedious argument of insidious intent to lead you to an overwhelming question, oh do not ask what is it, let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go talking of Michelangelo. Now at the very beginning you find that this it starts with an invitation, a very dramatic invitation; let us go then you and I, it sounds romantic, let us go the evening is falling spread out against the sky. And the first two lines think you know will give an image of idyllic romanticism, there is almost like a romantic poem; beckoning someone to go out with you, beckoning inviting someone warmly in a romantic rhetoric to go out and take a walk as the evening is falling the sky, against the sky.

But the very third line has a medical metaphor, which is important for us to observe; like a patient etherized upon a table and we realize we understand we think what is this image doing here, I mean in an otherwise romantic beginning. So, the evening which is spread out against the sky is basically like a patient etherized upon a table and this image of the patient spread across a table, etherized, numbed in a table about to be operated; it also brings in mind the medieval rack of torture, which was which are very similar structure by the way, the human subject were placed on that medieval rack and were spread across the rack in terms of torturing him and then entire instrument of torture would be then you know operated on him.

So, in both cases, the patient etherized upon a table as well as the medieval rack of torture; we have the space of oppression, we had a space where the human subject's agency is completely annihilated, there is no agency at all, so to say. So, the patient etherized upon a table, numbed in a table; and its entire image of numbness becomes important, because what that conveys is a lack of feeling, as a in a complete annihilation of feeling and with that annihilation. With that depletion of feeling; obviously, that is connected to a depletion of emotions, the depletion of agency; and you will find that in more dramatic descriptions in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* where the human subject is completely bereft of emotions, right. And that that loss of emotion becomes almost a cognitive crisis and the cognitive crisis is very much there in Eliot's poetry as well.

The fear the crisis of cognition, the crisis of recognition and cognition is rampantly present in Eliot's early poetry. So, that image of the patient etherized upon a table, numbed on a table is very important for us to observe and we will come back to it. And we'll find how that connects to the other narratives that this poem is offering us, ok. Let us go through certain half deserted streets, again look at the halfness of Eliot's early poetries; half deserted which is also say is half full, but it does not pick half full, it says half deserted.

So, a sense of abandon, abandonment is very much there in Eliot's early poetry especially in *Prufrock*; that you know there is an image of something being abandoned, there is an image of a space being abandoned, a subject being abandoned and that sense of being abandoned is very much there and that is something which is a recurring motif, so to say in Eliot's early poetry. You know these half deserted streets there is a very crucial metaphor for that, ok.

The muttering retreats of restless nights in one-night cheap hotel. So, again this whole image of the cheap hotel, the very seedy space of the cheap hotel is important for us to observe. And the hotel image is important because what we get is not a home image, it is not really an image of a home, of warmth, of stability, of solidity; it's not that at all; instead it is an image of liminality, of frequency, of you know recurring visits coming and going with no sense of inhibition and this image of coming and going comes back in the end as well.

But the fact that look at the way in which that image of woman coming and going talking of Michelangelo is being prepared by the hotel image over here, the cheap hotels people who are just coming for one night; very often for some very dubious reasons, for some very dodgy reasons, right. So, that image of one-night cheap hotels which is also a very negative reflection of human relationships, which is a fragmented, alienated, just debased into some very basic, excuse me into something, not very luxurious, not very fertile, not very rich at all.

And that sense of you know abandoned spaces, that sense of cheap spaces, that sense of being exhausted is very much there in this image of this one-night cheap hotels, restless nights in one-night cheap hotels. So, again there is no peace at all; it is a complete anti image of peace, right; so it is anti-peace, anti-tranquility, anti-fulfillment. Hence what we will have this fragmentation, alienation, isolation and you know that becomes restless and that restlessness is generated out that space; this one-night cheap hotels which is obviously, an image of very seedy, dodgy activity right; not rich or fulfilling human activity at all.

And sawdust restaurants with oyster shells, streets that follow like a tedious argument of insidious intent. So, again the whole idea of tedious argument is not really a clever argument, is not really a penetrating argument; it is a tedious argument, it nags you, it exhausts you, it irritates you, it makes you nervous, it makes you irritated right of insidious intent. So, the intent is insidious intend to something which is not benevolent at all, right. So, look at the way in which space and a human mind they're connected to each other over here. So, a street is you know compared to or described as a tedious argument, right.

Again this is something which we find a very heavily present in Eliot's early poetry which is to say, the example of metaphysical conceit, right. And if we look at those of you who are aware of metaphysical poetry would know, the poetry of John Donne Andrew Marvell they relied very heavily on this particular technique, where two different, very disparate objects very disparate entities will be compared. For instance, John Donne in his poem, in his one particular poem about two lovers; he would say, the male lover would say to the female subject that no matter how far I go away from you, we are like two hands of a compass, so no matter how much stretch we are connected at one basic foundational point.

So, again using something of a mathematical instrument like compass to talk about human emotions, to talk about human love is something which is very shocking and that metaphysical conceit had a shocking effect, had a shock effect which is deliberately dramatized and conveyed to the reader. Now we find something similar in Eliot's early poetry as well; in the sense that, we have these metaphysical conceits, we have those very disparate entities sort of almost violently put together to defamiliarize the emotion and that act of defamiliarization is important; because you saw that in Conrad's Heart of Darkness. And we see that now in more dramatic elements in Eliot's early poetry; in the space of poetry where defamiliarization actually has more of an effect on us.

And even I mean poetry is a genre, so to say is about defamiliarization, right. It does something special to language, it changes language; it changes the arrangement of language, it changes the entire grammar of language and it makes language and it is something else, right. So, the way you consume language in poetry becomes very different, for the way we consume let us say in a novel or in a short story ok, generally speaking.

So, and modernist poetry is all about defamiliarization, modernist poetry is all about making something strange, right. And you know it is very strange metaphor if you think about it; the street has been compared to an argument, a tedious argument it's something which follows you all the time, a tedious argument which nags you, which does not let you go, which follows you, which sort of almost stalks you. And that is the street over here like the argument is stalking you, so it is like a stalker metaphor which is used over here; but then that leads you to an overwhelming question and what is the question.

Oh do not ask what is it, let us go and make our visit, right. So, again there is a degree of procrastination over here; do not ask the question, do not ask what is it, no it is a half complete question, instead let us go on make our visit, right. In the room the women come and go talking of Michelangelo. So, again the entire liminality the movement of women coming and going, speaking of Michelangelo is something which is you know deliberately given to us. And now this particular scene if you visualize it, is a very cinematic scene; where women coming and going talking of Michelangelo, it is obviously, a very high culture space.

It is a space of high brow culture very upper class social circles, where let us say very wealthy privileged people come and talk about art and culture and literature and painting and different kinds of artistic activities which only the very privileged have access to, right. So, this reference to Michelangelo over here becomes a signifier of privilege, becomes the signifier of high culture and culture as consumed by privileged people. So, culture over here becomes an act of consumption, right.

And in order to have access to that cultural space to that space in particular; we need to have the pointers of privilege, you need to wear the certain right kind of dress, you need to speak the right kind of language, you need to have right kind of embodiment, right. So, embodiment becomes a very important issue in Eliot's early poetry and it is something I wanted to come to very early on. Now what is embodiment? Embodiment is the process through which you neurally as well as discursively negotiate with your surroundings, that is the working definition of an embodiment for the purpose of this particular course. So, how do you neurally and cognitively negotiate with your environment right and also that cognitive neural negotiation also becomes discursive in quality; let us say for instance we use language as an example.

The use of language at a very embedded level is neural and cognitive, right. So, that you can only use language through your brain, you can only use language through your body, through your nerves, through your senses; but at the same time how you use language, what is the manner in which you speak, what is the manner in which you perform language that is discursive in quality. Right, and that carries discursive markers; so what is the kind of metaphor that you are using, what is the kind of sophistication that you are using; is your language sophisticated, is your language advanced, is your language base

that would obviously, very quickly generate identity markets which are socially constructed.

Like for instance, if someone speaking in a very posh language which is very posh sophisticated, advanced, full of lovely metaphors, so that usage of language becomes the marker of privilege, becomes a marker of prestige. Now someone uses language in different way, which is so to say in a not very sophisticated, which is very base full of errors, it is ridiculed; so that becomes, that use of language then becomes a marker of just the opposite lack of prestige, lack of sophistication you know something which is you know underprivileged for instance, you know it is impoverished.

So, that informs embodiment in the sense that it informs how your identity is consumed in a discursive space. So, identity making or identity information is a neural cognitive embodied process and also equally it's a discursive process. Now this particular space where a woman coming or talking of Michelangelo is a very sophisticated, posh, you know privileged kind of a space; where people come and talk about high art, high culture, you know certain kind of dresses, certain kind of fashions is high kind of talk. So, it is all that kind of a space which is being represented over here.

Now the male speaker in this particular poem, it desires to have access to that space and that desire is important; because that desire is constantly frustrated, right. And as a result of which we see this constant procrastination on a part of the male speaker that, you know he wants to go to the space, he wants to be the epicenter of attention, he wants to be the very much a part of that kind of conversation, a component of that conversation; but he cannot, because he cannot bring himself along to perform the right kind of embodiment in order to have access there, right. So, that becomes a very much an embodiment problem. So, among other things, Eliot's early poetry especially *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* is about the crisis of embodiment and that is something which I want to emphasize very heavily at this point, ok.

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Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

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,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
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.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.



Now, let us take a look at the second stanza and see how we have this feline image, where the evening is like a cat; you know the fog on evening is like a cat it is licking its way across different spaces. And it is important for us to see how again it is an example of metaphysical conceit, where we have very disparate entities are brought together, almost forcibly to generate a certain kind of image, a certain kind of affect so to say. So, we saw already how the street is compared to very nagging argument, which stalks you, nags you, irritates you does not let you go the street follows you in the same sense of being a stalker. And we have a similar kind of metaphysical conceit coming up over here, where the yellow fog has been compared to something like a feline creature, something which is licking its tongue across different spaces.

Let us see how Eliot or the speaker represents it; the yellow fog that rubs its back upon the windowpanes, the yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the windowpanes licked its tongue into the corners of the evening, lingered upon the pools that stand in drains, let fall upon his back the soot that falls from chimneys, slipped by the terrace made a sudden leap, and seeing that it was a soft October night, curled once above the house, and fell asleep. So, again look at the way in which the evening the fog, you know it is supposed to have a tongue, it is supposed to you know walk around there in the terrace, slipping in and out of the terrace, making a leap, curling once above the house and then falling asleep. So, again it is a very organic metaphors; it is almost to say that, fog has a life over here, it has a very animated image, it has an organic image.

So, you know the yellow fog is rubbing its back upon the windowpanes like a cat would, right. The yellow smoke is rubbing his muzzle on the windowpanes. So, again the windowpanes become an important metaphor over here and the window obviously, represents the house; but again look at the way in which the house is the metonymically represented which is to say that, is it is represented through certain fragments. And that again it is very important in part of the politics of representation in Eliot's early poetry; the very interestingly metonymic quality that nothing is shown to you in a full-fledged form, everything is broken down into fragments, you know the body is broken down into hands, feet, you know fingers, the houses are broken down into window panes, half opened doors, etcetera. So, nothing is holistically presented to you, except in fragments and that fragmented quality, it is very important for us to observe.

And it licks its tongue into the corners of the evening; again the fog, the smoke which are so to say they are not figures of organic entities at all, they are not really living beings at all; but they are supposedly represented as living beings. Lingered upon the pools to stand and drain; so again, look at the very cinematic image, it is almost like a close up of a pool that is standing in the drain. So, you know this very sordid, seedy urban setting that is described to us in very cinematic terms; almost like someone's moving with a movie camera and someone's giving you close ups with a movie camera and all these close ups forming a montage, which forms part of the Eliot's which part forms part of narrative over here.

So, it has this visual, the grammar of a visual montage or the photo montage and this is important; because in Eliot was heavily interested like other modernists in cinema and a large part of modernism's anxiety as well as aspiration was around cinema and it is there is a different kind of research altogether to be had; I am not going to digress too much, but suffice it to say that people like Eliot, Joyce, Woolf they had this very ambivalent attitude to a cinema. In a sense that, they felt cinema to be a certain kind of a threat, they were threatened to a certain extent because cinema to them had a certain kind of visual machinery, had a visual mechanism which had surpassed language they thought it upon a time. And they thought cinema was very potent as a form of representation.

But at the same time there is also the admiration toward cinema and with the admiration came on degree of appropriation. So, you find over here Eliot is using heavily the grammar of the photo montage; in a sense that we have a sense that, someone's moving

with a movie camera in hand and is capturing everything around him and giving the images, little montage elements, very metonymic images of an evening spreading across the very sordid and seedy urban setting, right. And that is depicted to you using the images of chimneys, drains, windowpanes, yellow fog, yellow smoke, broken terraces and you know obviously, before that we have the image of this one at cheap hotels.

So, the visual politics, the visual setting which is generated out of this particular description is one of despair, one of brokenness, one of alienation; which is a very metropolitan phenomena especially depicted in modernism, right. So, this becomes very much a part of modernity right; the you know and there is lot of work done comparing in the metropolis and the human psyche.

One magnificent work is Georg Simmel's book called the Metropolis and Mental Life, which is something I heavily recommend; if you want to do go deeper into that kind of research, just one book I recommend very heavily Georg Simmel's, you know modernity Metropolis in the Modern Life and Mental life, right. So, that is something which you can read up and that is something which informs directly this kind of depiction that we see in Eliot's early poetry.

So, just to come back to this particular stance that the yellow fog, the yellow smoke are described as feline creatures; you know organic creatures who are lurking around the house, licking the tongue, licking with the tongue the window panes, curling around the window panes and then you know rubbing the back in the window panes. And then you know once seeing that it was soft October night falling asleep by the window panes on the terrace ok. So, the movements are very organic the movements are very jerky.

So, again this is has a very camera like quality to it; the very jerky, handheld movement and I am thinking of Vertov's film Man with a Movie Camera, which was you know which was very famous at that point of time and maybe Eliot was aware of it.

And Eliot was definitely aware of the Lumiere, Eliot was definitely aware of the different kind of cinematic movements happening at that point of time; Eliot was definitely aware of Chaplin, Charlie Chaplin. Again, one good book to read if you are interested in the relationship between cinema and modernism is David Trotter's book called a Modernism and Cinema; and that is something we should read, if you are interested in that kind of research.

But suffice it to say, Eliot's early poetry especially Prufrock is full of cinematic movements, is full of camera movements and the visual narrative generated in this particular poem is very cinematic and camera like in quality, ok. So, let us come to the next stanza. And indeed there will be time for the yellow smoke that slides along the street, rubbing its back upon the windowpanes; 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 hundred indecisions, and for hundred visions and revisions, before the taking of a toast and tea. In the room the women come and go talking of Michelangelo.

So, I will stop at this point, but I will just go back and reread this and see how this becomes a very good example of existential crisis, which is informed by you know a cognitive crisis, informed by something very artificial. So, the whole image of time coming back; there will be time, there will be time for the yellow smoke that slides along the street, rubbing its back upon the windowpanes; there will be time, there will be time to prepare a face, to meet the faces that you meet.

So, that is to say, the entire performative quality of embodiment. So, you have to prepare a face, to meet the faces that you meet, right. So, you know in other words human meetings or human encounters, they are very performative in quality and again that becomes part of the artificial mechanism of modernity. The fact that you know every movement, every meeting and every encounter is artificial and performative in quality; and that obviously, makes the human subject neurotic, right.

This constant compulsion to perform, this constant compulsion to carry out encounters carry out meetings which are performative, which are perfect; that creates that generates a degree of neurosis which is something which the speaker is talking about over here. There will be time to murder and create. So, again look at the way in which murder and create two contrasting adjectives, two contrasting verbs sorry are put together juxtaposed together to create this attitude of ambivalence, right. So, you can murder something, you can kill something, you can decimate something and also create something. So, murdering and creating go hand in hand in this kind of existence.

And time for all the works and days of hands to lift and drop a question on your plate. So, again look at the way in which something as abstract as question is materialized over here; here it has a very solid material signifier, something which can be dropped on your plate, right something which is palpable, something which can be held, something which is tactile in quality. And again, this is something that I want to talk a little bit about specially in the next lecture, there are very synesthetic quality in Eliot's early poetry. Now what is synesthetic, what is synesthesia?

Synesthesia is that condition that cognitive condition, where your normal sense of normal awareness of things get criss-crossed; like for instance what you can normally smell can also be felt, can also be touched; what you can normally hear can also be smelled; what you can normally see can also be touched.

So, again it is basically a crisscross of different cognitive conditions, right. So, that very complex cognitive condition which can sometimes be medical, which can sometimes be spiritual that is called synesthesia. Now synesthesia is very much there in Eliot's early poetry, now you can see over here; in a time and question which are very abstract categories that actually are seen as something that is tactile in quality, something which you can touch, something which can palpably be presented. So, you know questions can be dropped on a particular plate, on a plate; time for you and time for me and time yet for a hundred indecisions and for hundred visions and revisions before the taking of a toast and tea.

Now again, you can look at the way in which Eliot's poetry also has a bathetic quality. Now what is bathos? Bathos is anticlimax. So, it is gearing up for something momentous from something profound and then he ends with something which is completely non-profound, something which almost flippant in quality. And you know; obviously, one of Eliot's very famous line is; it starts with a bang, but ends with a whimper right, which is from Hollow Men. So, it always ends with a whimper. So, you had these spiritual metaphors coming in condensing together to create something and prepare you as a reader for something spiritual and deep and profound; and then we get this image of taking of toast and tea, which is the most banal daily activity, right.

But the point is that is the important thing in Eliot's early poetry that, it actually combines the banal and the profound together, and does not look at profound with

something which is out there; the profound is something which is embedded in banality, right. So, banality and profundity go hand in hand in Eliot's early poetry, right. And whole image of time over here is important, because that is something which we would keep coming back in Eliot's early poetry especially in *Prufrock*.

Now, there are two kinds of time in Eliot's poetry and especially in modernism. If you look take a look at even *Heart of Darkness* especially we will see in Mrs. Dalloway and Joyce's *Ulysses*, there are two kinds of time which are represented in this kind of narratives; one is clock time, standard time, digitized time, something which can be shared and measured and quantified. The other is psychological time something which we inhabit through your senses, something which you inhabit spiritually, existentially, emotionally. Now clock time and psychological time may or may not conform together, may or may not be you know you know in conformity with each other; it can be completely in sync as well as out of sync, right.

Now what is happening over here when Eliot is saying, when the speaker is saying there will be time there will be time; and then of course, it comes back to a very banal thing. It is a very interesting montage of different narratives of time and it is a very interesting montage of clock time and psychological time. And a philosopher that is these people heavily borrowed on is someone called Henri Bergson. Bergson the French philosopher on time and that is something which is Eliot is obviously, heavily influenced by over here, right. So, what do you think there would be time to prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet; which is very spiritual and psychological and existential and then it all comes back and into the whole idea of taking of a toast and a tea.

Now, before that there is an image of hundred indecisions, which is obviously, part of the procrastination package in this particular poem; everything is getting procrastinated, getting delayed, getting half done. So, the sense of being delayed, the sense of being you know temporarily complicated it is something which we see over here. And of course, it is it contains a hundred visions and revisions. So, every vision is followed by a revision and it all cuts back then into this very banal image of taking toast and tea, right. So, the banality and the profundity they go hand in hand over here and in these very interesting cognitive ways.

And again, we have the recurring motif, the recurrence of the line; in the room women come and go talking of Michelangelo, right. So, again this whole idea of the women coming and going, leaving you know entering and departing, talking of Michelangelo is; obviously, it suggests a very superficial kind of a space, where people come and talk about certain pointers of privilege. Speaking of Michelangelo will generate a certain kind of identity about you right; and these women coming and going obviously, it is a very privileged set of people as I mentioned already, talking about something very privileged, something very high culture. In that particular room in which this particular speaker aspires to go to; but he cannot bring himself to reach there, ok.

And the whole poem is about wanting or desiring to go to that particular space, wanting or desiring to be accepted in that particular space and failing to do so, right. So, the entire poem is about the failure of being accepted the failure to narrate the failure to talk about what is actually going on in your mind. In that sense it is very interestingly connected and can be related to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, where too we have a speaker coming back from a Non-European setting having experienced something horrifying, something's having experienced something which is momentous; but he cannot bring himself to actually tell what happened to him to European audience right; because he would not be accepted and received and understood over there at all.

So, like *Heart of Darkness*, this particular poem is also about incomprehensibility; it is also about the failure of communication, it is also about the cognitive crisis which then becomes a communication crisis, which then becomes an embodiment crisis, right. So, that becomes part of the sequence of crisis in Eliot's early poetry as you can see also in *Heart of Darkness*.

So, I stop at this point today and I continue with this in next lecture.

Thank you for your attention.