

**Twentieth-Century Fiction**  
**Prof. Avishek Parui**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**

**Lecture – 19**  
**Preludes – Part 2**

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T.S. Eliot (1888–1965)

**Preludes**

**I**

The winter evening settles down  
With smell of steaks in passageways.  
Six o'clock.  
The burnt-out ends of smoky days.  
And now a gusty shower wraps  
The grimy scraps  
Of withered leaves about your feet  
And newspapers from vacant lots;  
The showers beat  
On broken blinds and chimney-pots,  
And at the corner of the street  
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.  
And then the lighting of the lamps.

**II**

The morning comes to consciousness  
Of faint stale smells of beer  
From the sawdust-trampled street  
With all its muddied feet that press  
To early coffee-stands.  
With the other masquerades  
That times resumes,  
One thinks of all the hands  
That are raising dingy shades  
In a thousand furnished rooms.

**III**

You tossed a blanket from the bed  
You lay upon your back, and waited;  
You dozed, and watched the night revealing  
The thousand sordid images  
Of which your soul was constituted;  
They flickered against the ceiling,  
And when all the world came back  
And the light crept up between the shutters  
And you heard the sparrows in the gutters,  
You had such a vision of the street  
As the street hardly understands;  
Sitting along the bed's edge, where  
You curled the papers from your hair,  
Or clasped the yellow soles of feet  
In the palms of both soiled hands.

**IV**

His soul stretched tight across the skies  
That fade behind a city block,  
Or trampled by insistent feet  
At four and five and six o'clock;  
And short square fingers stuffing pipes,  
And evening newspapers, and eyes  
Assured of certain certainties,  
The conscience of a blackened street  
Impatient to assume the world.  
I am moved by fancies that are curled  
Around these images, and cling;  
The notion of some infinitely gentle  
Infinitely suffering thing.  
Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh;



So, hello and welcome to this NPTEL course entitled Twentieth-Century Fiction, where we are looking at T.S. Eliot's poem, Preludes which is part of the longer collection of poems entitled Prufrock and Other Observations. So, we began with this text already, and we had one lecture on it. And we just hopefully all of us have an idea about the setting of the poem and the atmosphere that a poem is trying to depict through a certain kind of representational politics.

So, the atmosphere is one of alienation, is one of metropolitan alienation is one of the drudgery and the mechanical existence of modern man in metropolis. And is also about the entire idea of being lonely, the entire idea of being broken, and this brokenness, loneliness, they are represented through a certain kind of you know narrative technique, and that narrative technique often appropriates metonymic mode of appropriation, metonymic mode of representation sorry.

So, the metonymic mode is very clearly represented in a way in which the human body is divided, is broken down under certain fragments right, and also the way in which certain

inanimate objects are humanized. So, the irony over here is inanimate objects are humanized, and the human objects, the human beings over here, you know they are anonymized, at the same time they are mechanized right.

So, we have this entire setting of anonymity, the entire atmosphere of anonymity standardization and uniformity. So, for instance, if you remember the last line of the second stanza with which we ended yesterday the last lecture, the whole idea of raising all the hands raising dingy shades in a thousand furnished rooms. So, the focus is again on the hands raising dingy shades in a thousand furnished rooms. So, it almost appears like a collective activity, an anonymous collective activity, where there is no individual agency, there is no individuality left right. So, all the hands are coming together and collectively raising the shades on a thousand furnished rooms.

So, rooms are all furnished in a very similar way the hands all you know representing the bigger broader human body, which in turn represents the human self. So, the self is fragmented at so many levels, the level of the body, the level of the mind, the level of intention, etcetera. So, among different things, it is urban metropolis or the metropolitan life generates is an idea of anonymity, the idea of a collective activity, which is not to say collective in a democratic sense, it is collective in a standardized sense, so forcibly standardized sense right. So, there is no individual agency left, there is no uniqueness so to say even at the level of motor movements, even the motor movements the hand movements, the foot movement, the eye movement, they also those movements a level of motor movements also they take place in a very anonymized standardized way right.

So, the standardization is part of the metropolitan lifestyle over here, which is something which the poem is representing through a very, very visual narrative. And the narrative of course is very cinematic, and it does appropriate the montage quality of cinema, early cinema especially of which Eliot was extremely aware.

Now, we move onto the third stanza, where we have a human figure, and it is obviously unnamed. But if we take a look at description of the figure one could hazard a guess maybe this description of a prostitute, a woman who sells her body, a woman who is recovering from a very hard day's work. And in that sense the figure of the prostitute becomes important, because what the poem tries to depict is that every human being

becomes a prostitute himself or herself in the sense of becoming a reified object. So, every human body becomes reified.

So, reification – r e i f i c a t i o n; reification is the process through which an entity becomes a commodity, everything comes with a price tag, everything becomes a commodity. So, the figure the prostitute over here like the figure of the lonely cab horse, are both examples of prostitution, are both examples of commodification, both examples of alienation. So, the alienation of the of the commodified entity the alienation of the commodified subject. So, the human subject is so alienated, because it is commodified, is reified. So, reification and alienation – two classic Marxist terms, are depicted over here through very interesting montage techniques.

So, the figure the prostitute the figure of the woman over here who is recovering from a very hard day's work from very hard day's drudgery of work, and just has this moment's epiphany just one little moment of epiphany where she inhabits a pure moment of psychological time, a pure moment of a real time so to say. And if you remember we talked about real time and clock time, or clock time or psychological time in some details, we looked at the Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock. And of course, the philosopher that you should be studying for this is someone called Henri Bergson, H E N R I B E R G S O N, Bergson's notion or Bergson's thesis on time is absolutely foundational in terms of how time gets represented or how temporality gets represented in modernism, in modernist literature, or at least in high modernist literature.

So, let us take a look at the third stanza, and see how the plays are of the different orders of temporality and embodiment. Because embodiment remember is also very temporal phenomenon in Eliot's early poetry, it is not just a spatial phenomenon. So, if you look for instance, if you take a look at the Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock which we finished already, we see over there even there the human subject wants to get wants to attain embodiment or wants to extend the embodiment in the room where the women come and go talking about Michelangelo, so it's that kind of a space which is also temporal in quality, the woman come and go talking with Michelangelo.

So, embodiment is a spatiotemporal activity in Eliot's early poetry. And we find the same kind of spatiotemporal politics, the same kind of spatiotemporal setting is represented here in third stanza. So, this should be on your screen. And let us take a look

at the third stanza in this poem. You tossed a blanket from the bed, you lay upon your back, and waited; you dozed, and watched the night revealing, the thousand sordid images of which your soul was constituted; they flickered against the ceiling. And when all the world came back and the light crept up between the shutters, and you heard the sparrows in the gutters. You had such a vision of the street as the street hardly understands; sitting along the bed's edge, where you curled the papers from your hair, or clasped the yellow soles of feet in the palms of both soiled hands.

Now, if we take a look at the opening, the verbs are important over here. You tossed a blanket from the bed. So, there's a movement at the very opening of this particular stanza - the blanket is being tossed away from the bed. So, it is indicative of some kind of an energetic movement an energetic I mean a motor mechanism, but then of course, the whole idea of that is undercut by the inertia and the boredom, and the loneliness and the nothingness which get represented in the subsequent movement and in the subsequent verbs.

The human subject over here is said that the representation as you lay upon your back, and waited. So, again the whole idea of waiting for something to happen, lying on your back, on the bed and waiting for something to happen. And then you dozed and watched the night revealing the thousand sordid images of which your soul was constituted. So, again look at the way in which this very cinematic montage technique is represented over here.

So, the whole idea the whole life, the whole image of the soul, the whole content of the human soul is projected as a through a projector onto on a ceiling on which everything is played out, and the human subject lies on her back, on a bed, after tossing the blanket, and looks at a soul gets getting played out on a ceiling through a sense of projection through a through a movement of projection. So, projection becomes important over here; it is almost like a cinematic projector, and the entire visuality is very cinematic over here.

So, the human subject is just lying on the bed, and looking at the content of a soul getting played out in a ceiling bit by bit; so it is very fragmented it is very visual, and it is very montage likes. So, the cinematic montage is very, very pervasive, is very evidently pervasive in Eliot's early poetry, and this is a very classic case in point where the soul is

getting played out, the soul becomes the visual object which is consumed, by the human subject lying on the bed.

And then of course, the whole idea of flickering against the ceiling, the flicker against the ceiling. So, the flicker is an important word over here, because that is a very classic cinematic term. So, the visual images they get, they flicker out of a projector right. So, the eyes become the projector, and the soul becomes the medium of the film which gets played out on a big screen. So, again look at the way in which certain abstract almost intangible, and profound you know entities such as the soul, such as the human mind, such as the human consciousness, they are represented, they are perceived, they are consumed through certain very mechanical metaphors, through certain very tangible objects, tangible technological objects right.

So, therein lies a very interesting entanglement between the tangible and the intangible between the organic and the inorganic in Eliot's early poetry, where the human being is represented as an inorganic machine, whereas machines are getting more humanized, so that that completely blurs away the boundary between the organic and the inorganic. It blurs away the boundary between what is tangible, and what is intangible, what is profound, what is flippant, and what is mystical, and what is material.

So, the mystical experience over here is represented through material markers. The ceiling you know the soul getting flickered out of the human mind. And the eye looking at the content of the soul flickering on the ceiling, it is like a cinema projector, it is like a cinema screen. So, a ceiling becomes cinema screen in which the life narrative plays out as if like a film right, and that is a very important way in which you remember that modernism was very interested in the new forms of technology especially the cinema, or radio, or typewriter. So, all these things come keep coming up quite heavily in Eliot's early poetry.

We move onto Wasteland after this particular poem, we find that the technology that the markers of technology are sort of completely mapping the metropolis, and not just the metropolis or the world outside, but also the way in which human consciousness plays the human consciousness perceives itself. So, the awareness of awareness it is almost like a meta conscious and the metacognitive quality where you are aware of being aware.

So, even that those experiences are mediated through machines, even those experiences are mediated through markers of technology.

So, over here we have the image of a woman presumably a woman who is lying on the bed, you know tossing the blanket from the bed, and it could also be a man, it could also be a worker, it could also be you know a laborer who is coming back at the end of a very long day, and finds himself completely drained out, and exhausted. And suddenly having this image this epiphany or this epiphanic image of his own life getting played out on a ceiling, but the ceiling becomes in a sense a cinema screen, and the consciousness over here becomes the cinema projector in which projects or throws out or hurls out the content of the life or the content of the soul across the ceiling ok.

So, it becomes an important visual grammar of representation. So, the flicker against the ceiling. And when all the world came back and the light crept up between the shutters and you heard the sparrows in the gutters. So, the light comes back. So, when the world comes back, and the light crept up between the shutters, so the light entering through the shutters is indicative of the beginning of the day.

So, the whole idea of this nocturnal epiphany where the human subject sees himself as a projected on a screen and a ceiling, and that experience of watching a life on a ceiling it gets interrupted only when the world comes back or the world wakes up again the which is to say it becomes daytime again, and the light creeps between the shutters. So, when you say the when the light crept up between the shutters, and you heard the sparrows in the gutters, so again the gutter is an important image over here the important metaphor of you know drudgery, an important metaphor of dirt or the filth of the modern metropolis or rather the wasted quality of the modern metropolis.

So, the modern metropolis over here is essentially a wasteland. And of course, when we move on to Eliot's poem, the Wasteland, which is the text which we will cover up cover right after this, we find that entire metropolis becomes the wasteland. So, almost like a cactus existence, where nothing grows, where there is no fertility, where there is no nourishment, there is no human connect, there is no empathy whatsoever right. So, the image of the gutters, or image of the sparrows in the gutters, is indicative of the drudgery, or the filth, or the dirt in modern life right. And of course, the light coming back it is an interruption of the epiphany.

So, again look at the way in which the photo play is important in Eliot's early poetry how light and shade, or light and shadow are played against each other.

So, light is not always indicative of illumination in a spiritual mystical sense, rather light can also be used over here as an image of darkness, as a as a instrument of darkness it's something which accentuates the darkness more heavily right. So, over here when the light comes between the shutters, when the light is said to be creeping up between the shutters that is the time where the sparrows are heard in the gutters which means it's the break of the day, the dawn is breaking and the day is about to begin which is also to say that the epiphany, the nocturnal epiphany is coming to an end, and that becomes again it goes back to the whole idea of clock time and real time.

So, the entire epiphany or the entire experience of epiphany is inhabited or inhabits itself in the psychological time in the mind time in the real time or the speaker. And that real time or that psychological time gets interrupted when the clock time comes back or the awareness of clock time comes back, or the machinery or the markers of clock time comes back. When the light is creeping up between the shutters and the sparrows are heard from the gutters which means these are like acoustic markers of the beginning of the day. And these acoustic markers are important because that cuts into the whole experience of psychological time that psychological time comes to an end.

But before it comes to an end, the final epiphany is represented, the final epiphany is experienced. What is epiphany you had such a vision of the street as the street hardly understands right. So, again the street is an important metaphor over here. And the fourth stanza, we find the street becomes a metaphor or something which is trampled on over again. So, again like the lonely cab horse, like the lonely and tired feet you know walking towards the coffee stands, like the tired human body, tossing the blanket from the bed, and watching its own life being played out on a ceiling, the street over here is humanized, the street over here becomes the metaphor of a very sordid metropolitan existence which is one of a torture, which is one of suffering which is one of endless suffering, which is one of being trampled on by incessant feet. It is something which is painful, and alienating and completely agencyless.

So, again the agencylessness of existence is something which is highlighted over here. There is no human agency available; there is no available agency whatsoever right. And

again this whole idea, the whole denial of agency is important, because what that also means is that a human being is consumed by the machinery of the metropolis right. And this act of consumption pervades throughout the poem. And this is something which you saw also in the Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock, where the human subject was supposedly consumed by the metropolis and the machinery right. So, that becomes an important image over here.

So, the street image is important, because, a – it is a spatial image, spatial symbol of the metropolis, and, b – it becomes a further accentuation of the suffering of modern man, wherein it is this space which gets trampled on incessantly; and there is no agency whatsoever in terms of any dialogic existence. It is just one space which gets trampled on endlessly throughout the day right. So, that image is important over here.

And also that connects with a broader issue which we have in hand which is how mechanical inanimate objects are humanized and human beings are mechanized, and that is something which with that interplay of machines getting humanized and human beings been mechanized is something which we see more powerfully in the Wasteland which is a text which we will start after this.

So, that image, that epiphany that vision of the street which is just one light bulb moment which comes in before the day begins again is an image which a street hardly understands. So, you have a vision of the street which the street hardly understands, which is to say that street becomes a metaphor of urban modernity or the modern condition of man which does not understand or does not have any knowledge of his own suffering.

So, suddenly this epiphany places you or situates you in an objective position wherein you can take a critical look an objective look at humanity right, and that becomes a privileged position. And like all privilege positions, this is strictly temporal in quality, it will end at some point right. And you come back to the clock time again you come back to the daily time again. But you do inhabit, you do manage to inhabit, little bit of time which is not clock time, psychological and real time, wherein when you take a look a privileged look into the condition of modernity, and the street becomes the metaphor of that condition which in itself does not understand. So, the street has no awareness of its own suffering, just like the modern metropolis has no awareness of its own suffering.



So, this figure of the human figure which could be a prostitute, which could be a factory laborer, which could be anything it is just a suffering human subject which is who is commodified over and over again. So, that suffering human subject ironically becomes a modern prophet, it becomes the seer of the modern metropolis in the same way as Marlow was a seer in *Heart of Darkness* this very exhausted seer, who nobody understands, who nobody believes, and who cannot himself bring about to tell the story of what he had seen right. So, the seer is essentially impotent in modernity and that's why we have so many blind prophets in Eliot's early poetry including Tiresias who appears in the *Wasteland*.

So, this image of the street not understanding its own suffering and the human being, the trampled human subject suddenly getting a glimpse of suffering becomes important, and it is the only epiphany available in this particular poem. So, sitting along the bed's edge, where you curled the papers from your hair, or clasped your yellow soles of feet in the palms of both soiled hands.

Again, look at the adjectives – yellow, soiled, curled. So, these are images of enervation; these are images of decadence. So, this probably indicate these are material markers of prostitution to a certain extent. So, the papers on the hair getting curled out, so it is a very seedy setting; it is a very decadent seedy setting and it is typical of a working class neighborhood in an urban metropolis where things are very decadent, things are very impoverished, and everyone is struggling to fit into the rhythms of modern existence.

So, this image of the prostitute, this image of the suffering subject becomes important over here as she is sitting, curling the papers on the hair or clasping yellow soles of feet. So, it is like a fetal image a fetal position where the human subject is clasping her yellow soles of feet. So, it is like going back to a fetal position, which is also an image of dehumanization, and going back to a situation or inhabiting a situation where we do not really have any human agency right. So, it is not really agentic position, it is an agencyless position, the fetal position and that is the position that is described over here. The human subject clasping the soles of his own feet, and the soles happen to be yellow as well which is color of jaundice, the classic color of jaundice which is to say, it is an image of lifelessness.

And again, you can connect it back to the withered leaves about your feet with which this poem began, and the evening newspapers and withered leaves which also were markers of exhaustion and death right. So, the same markers are continued over here in a more domestic in a more interior setting. So, the interior setting of course, is not one of homeliness it is just the opposite it is one of unhomeliness right it is one of uncanny or unhomely.

So, the whole point of being unhomely is represented over here, even the home is not home, it is just a space where people come and go and trample you like the street gets trampled on. And that image accentuates human suffering. So, even the interior space which is supposedly, which is supposed to comfort you, and offer you nourishment it does just the opposite. So, again you can connect it back to the lonely cab horse, tied to corner of the street, and steaming, and stamping with no forward movement.

So, again the motor movements. In Eliot's early poetry are important because the motor movements, there's often no direction, so they are essentially directionless movements. So, again the motor movements are further markers of impotence or further markers of you know destinationlessness in Eliot's early poetry or directionlessness, there is no direction or destination no movement in a scientific sense of a term, there is no movement forward at all it is just one Sisyphean quality where you continue doing the same thing over and over again ok.

So, the stanza ends with the yellow soles of feet and the soil hands. Again look at the very metonymic representation which is used to depict the human body, it is never depicted as a totality, never depicted fully. So, forget about the human self, even the human body is not represented fully. And this fragmented quality of representation is obviously, reflective of the alienation which is generated by the modern metropolis where there is no totality available, there is no total sense of self, there is no total sense of awareness.

So, even awareness a sense of self these get interrupted all the time, and that very interrupted embodiment is something which is represented through this very metonymic mode, where the focus is on feet, on hands, on fingers, etcetera, but never as the totality. So, the human body never appears as a totality at all in Eliot's early poetry and that is something which is worth noticing ok.

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I  
The winter evening settles down  
With smell of steaks in passageways.  
Six o'clock.  
The burnt-out ends of smoky days.  
And now a gusty shower wraps  
The grimy scraps  
Of withered leaves about your feet  
And newspapers from vacant lots;  
The showers beat  
On broken blinds and chimneyspots,  
And at the corner of the street  
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.  
And then the lighting of the lamps.

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The morning comes to consciousness  
Of faint stale smells of beer  
From the sawdust-trampled street  
With all its muddy feet that press  
To early coffee-stands.  
With the other masquerades  
That times resumes,  
One thinks of all the hands  
That are raising dingy shades  
In a thousand furnished rooms.

III  
You dozed, and watched the night revealing  
The thousand sordid images  
Of which your soul was constituted;  
They flickered against the ceiling.  
And when all the world came back  
And the light crept up between the shutters  
And you heard the sparrows in the gutters,  
You had such a vision of the street  
As the street hardly understands;  
Sitting along the bed's edge, where  
You curled the papers from your hair,  
Or clasped the yellow soles of feet  
In the palms of both soiled hands.

IV  
His soul stretched tight across the skies  
That fade behind a city block,  
Or trampled by insistent feet  
At four and five and six o'clock:  
And short square fingers stuffing pipes,  
And evening newspapers, and eyes  
Assured of certain certainties,  
The conscience of a blackened street  
Impatient to assume the world.  
I am moved by fancies that are curled  
Around these images, and cling:  
The notion of some infinitely gentle  
Infinitely suffering thing.  
Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh:  
The worlds revolve like ancient women  
Gathering fuel in vacant lots.



So, the final stanza of Preludes, it gives us certain images which are Christian in quality, but at the same time which continues the image of the suffering man in the modern metropolis. And this stanza begins with: his soul stretched out across the skies that fade behind a city block or trampled by insistent feet at four and five and six o'clock, and short square fingers stuffing pipes, and evening newspapers, and eyes assured of certain certainties. The conscience of a blackened street impatient to assume the world.

So, again if we take a look at the whole idea of the soul stretching across the skies, which is the image with which the Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock began, where the supposed call the romantic call to go for a walk is immediately followed by a patient etherized upon a table, where the evening is spread out against the sky like a patient a patient etherized upon a table. So, the medical metaphor, animistic metaphor, they are combined together to create a very complex cognitive condition with the medical and the mystical, they are interlinked together to create this unhealthy diseased human existence.

So, a similar kind of setting, a similar kind of image is represented also over here, where the image of soul stretched out across the skies which is also reminiscent of the medieval rack of torture, where the human subject is stretched out across, a torture rack and tortured. So, this medieval rack of torture, keeps coming back in Eliot's early poetry. And the soul of course, becomes the subject of torture, who is stretched out across the

skies and nailed in different points. So, it is like a Christ figure of suffering, and the entire modern metropolis becomes the subject of suffering over here.

That fade behind a city block. So, again a city block is something which hides or conceals certain sections of the soul or trampled by insistent feet at four and five and six o'clock. So, these are obviously, the very temporal rhythms of modernity where certain sections of the street gets trampled at certain sections of the day. So, again look at the spatiotemporal quality of representation over here. So, that particular street gets certain kind of behavior, at certain times of the day at four and five and six o'clock, so those are times of the day where certain trappings happens, so trampled by insistent feet. So, the insistent feet come trample and go away. Again, the focus is on feet.

And again, these are very cinematic techniques of representation. If you take a look at, those of you who are interested in the relationship between modernism and cinema. And I did mention David Trotter's work on Modernism and Cinema, but also if you take a look at some of the German expressionist cinema for instance, Fritz Lang's Film Metropolis, or Robert Wiene's film the Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, so those are German expressionist films, where the focuses are obviously, human motor movements through certain metonymic modes, the hand, the feet, the boot, the shoe, the pipe, those are the ones which get magnified and represented in terms of the rhythms of modern life which is to say everything becomes anonymous, everything becomes standardized, everything becomes one collective orchestrated movement, which is obviously reflective of the denial of agency.

No one can break away from the movement, there is no out of sync from that movement, everything marches together as one machinery of modernity right. So, the insistent feet is like one march of modernity on a particular time of the day, and no one is out of sync which is to say, there is no agency outside of it, there is no agency available.

So, the motor movements, I repeat myself the motor movements are very important in Eliot's early poetry, because the motor movements – the feet movements, the hand movements, the finger movements, the eye movements, they are all orchestrated, they are all collective, and they are all inform this entire industry of anonymity which is the modern metropolis right that is something which keeps getting represented over and over again in Eliot's early poetry. And of course, that continues, it is further metonymized

with the short square fingers, stuffing pipes, again the pipes, the fingers, stuffing the pipes.

So, again we do not really see any face, so the entire facelessness of modernity is indicative of the vast anonymity of the metropolis. No one knows anyone over here, it is completely an industry of anonymity. So, the short square fingers, stuffing pipes, and evening newspapers and eyes, so again evening newspaper are indicative of the trash of the modern metropolis, because by the time the evening comes the newspapers become useless, they get liquidated of importance, there is no importance left whatsoever. So, the newspapers become just trash papers right.

So, again we will we will focus more on the entire production of waste in the modern metropolis, when we look at Eliot's *Wasteland* when we look at how the River Thames gets littered with different kinds of waste products, but even here in preludes we have different kinds of markers of urban waste which get represented like the evening newspapers, which keep coming up over and over again.

And eyes assured of certain certainties. It was an ironic tone over here it is quite interestingly represented. Certain certainties, the eyes are sure of certain certainties which is to say that there is this vast uncertainty of existence, but that is the only certainty left the vast uncertainty.

And again, one can connect it back to *The Heart of Darkness* when Marlow comes back and knows the only certainty available is uncertainty, and that is why I cannot tell the full story in classic realism, because the story that he knows the story that he has experienced cannot be told in a certain frame of classic realism, and that is part of the failure in *Heart of Darkness*. So, that kind of a failure of storytelling, that kind of failure to narrate the experience is something which is represented here as well.

And finally, we have the image of the street again. The conscience of a blackened street impatient to assume the world. So, the blackened street becomes the metaphor of the suffering human subject, the blackened street becomes the metaphor of let us say urban sin or metropolitan sins. And of course, we can connect it back to the figure of the prostitute just at the beginning the previous stanza, where the fallen woman or even if it is a laborer, it is never clear the figure is male or female, but even if it is a laborer it is

indicative of a reified human subject. And of course, reification is very classic Marxist term it generates alienation.

Again, two very classic to Marxist terms reification, alienation, and alienation over here does not happen inside the factory or strictly speaking just inside the factory, but also outside the factory. It happens everywhere it happens even inside the homely space, which becomes increasingly unhomely with the rhythms of modern life.

So, the blackened street over here becomes the reservoir of the entire sordid quality, the sordid suffering of modernity, and hence the blackened quality it just becomes a reservoir, a very condensed metaphor of suffering in modern life, which is impatient to assume the world. So, the entire world is being assumed and consumed so there's this slightly cannibalistic quality about the street as well which sort of eats up the modern metropolis, and eats up the human subjects in a metropolis, who then behave like essentially like machines who are belched out of that particular machinery ok.

And finally, we have a first-person presence over here with a human subject appears as I am moved by fancies that are curled around these images, and cling. The notion of some infinitely gentle infinitely suffering things, so we have this image, this little Christ metaphor over here, the notion of some infinitely gentle, infinitely suffering thing that is the only solace left. So, that is the only solace available, the notion of some infinitely gentle infinitely suffering thing, but even here there is some degree of irony over here. If you take a look at the nouns, if you take a look at the epithets over here, notion and fancies, I am moved by fancies that are curled around these images: not imagination, but fancies right.

So, it is more of a degraded imagination, and more of a degenerated imagination, and it is a that is the only faculty left, that is the only belief system left, fancies, not imagination not the glamour of imagination, but a more degraded more degenerated faculty which is fancy, but that is the only available faculty left. And I am clinging on to it that is what the human subject is saying. I am clinging on to it. I am moved by fancies, so that curled around these images. Images of enervation, exhaustion and despair, the different markers of all these affects. And I am moved by the fancies that curl around it, and I am clinging on to this one solace left, and what is the solace left, what is the only

consolation left, what is the only belief system left the notion of some infinitely gentle infinitely suffering things.

So, the endlessness of suffering is something which is represented over here, which could be a Christ metaphor, which could be a metaphor of the you know suffering prophet, but it is the only solace left. The notion the idea of the some infinitely suffering thing right. So, the suffering is endless, the suffering is something which does not appear to offer any redemption, but it is gentle, it is infinite and it is endless.

So, the gentility of suffering and the endlessness of suffering is something which is represented over here as some kind of a pseudo solace right. And the pseudo quality the incomplete quality of this consolation is hinted at is reflected with the use of the word fancy, and use of the word you know curls and the notion of some of something infinitely gentle. It is not a belief it is a notion, it is an idea which may or may not be a belief in it is own right.

And the final image with which the poem ends is again a very Sisyphean activity where the speaker is pointing out to the listener and addressing listener, and saying wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh. The worlds revolve like ancient women gathering fuel in vacant lots. And that the final image is actually very, very interesting. If we take a look at it, it could be read in both ways; it could be an image of fulfillment, where the vacant lots are getting filled in with fuel which is an image of hope, or image of consolation, image of redemption. But if you take a look at it in another way, the lots are always vacant, so no matter how much you fill in, they always remain vacant lots right.

So, gathering fuel in vacant lots could also be a Sisyphean activity, where you just go on doing something which will never be fulfilled. So, the poem ends in a very open-ended way and both readings are equally acceptable. So, it is a degree of ambivalence with which the poem ends; it could be an image of you know fulfillment an image of positivity, an image of preservation an image of fertility, an image of it is obviously a harvest metaphor which is being used over here ancient women gathering fuel in vacant lots. But the word vacant is sort of begs to be read in a particular way as well which is to say the lots will always stay vacant. So, no matter how much fuel you fill in, you know it is just going to stay vacant forever, so which is a continuation or the Sisyphean quality of

modern man which is indicative of you know which is reflected elsewhere as well in this particular poem.

So, the poem ends in a very ambivalent open-ended way, and both readings are equally acceptable. But just to recap very quickly, the entire poem *Preludes* it is like a cinematic montage. You get four different shots taken together in four different settings, but they all come together to create one narrative of desolation, one narrative of despair and complete alienation. And interestingly the visual narrative over here is very cinematic in quality, we have long shots of the metropolis, we have long shots of you know leaves falling, newspapers curling around the street, and then you have close ups on feet on fingers and pipes, but we never get a good totality of existence, and that is the whole point, it is never a totality available over here.

So, the human life over here is essentially fragmented and alienated. And that fragmentation and alienation is represented with a very interesting and innovative use of metaphysical conceit as well as cinema techniques in Eliot's early poetry, which is something which you saw already in the *Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock*. So, with that we come to a conclusion on *preludes*. And we will move onto the *Wasteland* later in the next lecture.

Thank you for your attention.