

Twentieth Century Fiction
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Lecture - 04
The Fly - Part 1

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The Fly - Katherine Mansfield

Katherine Mansfield

"I are very snug in here," piped old Mr. Woodfield, and peered out of the great, green-leather armchair by his friend the boss's desk as a baby peers out of its pram. His talk was over; it was time for him to be off. But he did not want to go. Since he had retired, since his ... stroke, the wife and the girls kept him boxed up in the house every day of the week except Tuesday. On Tuesday he was dressed and brushed and allowed to cut back to the City for the day. Though what he did there the wife and girls couldn't imagine. Made a nuisance of himself to his friends, they supposed... Well, perhaps so. All the same, we cling to our last pleasures as the tree clings to its last leaves. So there sat old Woodfield, smoking a cigar and staring almost greedily at the boss, who rolled in his office chair, stout, rosy, five years older than he, and still going strong, still at the helm. It did one good to see him.

Wistfully, admiringly, the old voice added, "It's snug in here, upon my word!"

"Yes, it's comfortable enough," agreed the boss, and he flipped the Financial Times with a paper-knife. As a matter of fact he was proud of his room; he liked to have it admired, especially by old Woodfield. It gave him a feeling of deep, solid satisfaction to be planted there in the midst of it in full view of that frail old figure in the muffler.

"I've had it done up lately," he explained, as he had explained for the past how many weeks.

"New carpet," and he pointed to the bright red carpet with a pattern of large white rings. "New furniture," and he nodded towards the massive bookcase and the table with legs like twisted treacle. "Electric heating!" He waved almost exultantly towards the five transparent, pearly sausages glowing so softly in the tilted copper pan.

But he did not draw old Woodfield's attention to the photograph over the table of a grave-looking boy in uniform standing in one of those spectral photographers' parks with photographers' storm-clouds behind him. It was not new. It had been there for over six years.



So, hello and welcome to this twentieth century fiction NPTEL course, where we will begin with a new text today, which is Katherine Mansfield's short story "The Fly". We just finished "Ulysses" by James Joyce and move on from there into a shorter structure, shorter text which is this particular story "The Fly".

Now, before I dive into the text, just a little background about the story, I think is in order. This is essentially a story about the First World War and although the war is never really mentioned. I mean it just comes as a very-very tacit and oblique presence, but it is very much there as symbol of a spectral presence; a spectral field, as it were, informing the characters informing the action, informing the events of this particular story.

Now, one of the key things about the story is as is a case with most Mansfield stories and she is one of the greatest writers of short fiction is what gets told is something, sometimes less important than what does not get told right.

So, you know we need to pay very close attention to things which are not being said, things which are hinted; things which are insinuated; things which are very obliquely referred to and often times things which are told directly or talked about directly are just you know cover ups for things which the characters do not want to discuss, do not want to confront and it is this whole tension between what is told and what is not told is one of the great masteries you know in writing short fiction, in terms of making, you know what we call the economy of expression that you know, you can say so much by showing. So, little by telling, so little right so and showing and not telling becomes important as well.

So, Mansfield is a great artist in that tradition, I mean she obviously, is like I mentioned one of the greatest short story writers in the history of English literature, but also I think what makes her particularly interesting as a writer especially, in this course is how she is so reflective of twentieth century fiction in terms of looking at human consciousness in terms of looking at human memory, in terms of looking at epiphany and also in terms of the entire condensed structure of communication, the condensed communication where we sort of crystallize different moments together in some kind of a literary alchemy and then it produce as magnificent effect. The effect could be one of mourning, the effect could be one of loss, effect could be one of epiphany, etcetera.

Now, this particular story is one of the shortest short stories you ever come by, but you know despite its brevity it is actually a very-very complex short story. It is packed with different things; different kinds of moods; different kinds of affective tunnels and also the whole idea behind the short story about you know endurance. It is, because it is very-very important and of course, as I mentioned the First World War, it is never really talked about directly except in a very-very oblique reference, but it is very much there as a spectral presence and it is like a ghostly presence, behind everything that happens in the story.

Now, the other thing which we need to pay attention to in these short stories is the entire idea of superficiality. So, we have some very superficial structures or strands; superficial structures of solidity; superficial structures of a supremacy etcetera, which are there as constructs which are very-very quickly, deconstructed; very-very quickly decimated and instead what emerges in the short story very quickly is the idea of existential fragility. So, fragility becomes very-very important over here and the whole idea of strength and supremacy they appear as very superficial categories and the superficiality is important.

Especially, at the beginning of the short story, where we find that how a certain kind of affective mood, a certain kind of affective architecture is being very forcibly constructed, a very forcibly foregrounded, but what it is actually there beneath all the artificiality and superficiality, it is a very fractured fragile self and a fractured fragile quality and the fragility is something which we are, I know we should pay close attention to. And again this fragility is obviously, a psychological slash existential condition, but at the same time it is often also informed of material conditions. So, the materiality of fragility is something which we also should keep in mind.

Now, among other things this is also a short story which should interest those of you who are keen on research on masculinity especially, post war masculinity.

So, the whole idea of masculinity, the whole idea of a male body as something which is robust, something which is healthy, something which is productive something obviously, which corresponds to a sense of supremacy are all hinted at very-very closely in this particular story, but at the same time again like I mentioned, what gets very quickly revealed is the idea of fragility, is the idea of the fractured self which is something which keeps coming up despite the superficiality of supremacy, the superficiality of supreme you know characteristically controlled masculinity or controlling masculinity, a coercive masculinity.

So, there is a character called the boss in this short story and interestingly and appropriately, it is never named. We never know, get to know the name of the character except that he is called the boss all the time and obviously, the boss-ness of his character is a marker of his supremacy; is a marker of his dominance; is a marker of his love to dominate over everything and as a marker for a supremacy of superiority apropos of his surrounding people and this supremacy and super you know and superiority is obviously, part of this manly masculinist package which he is embodying very-very clearly.

So, the story opens with the boss and the boss is, obviously, contrasted with someone who is just the opposite; someone who is already fragile; someone who is already essentially decimated; someone who is already senile; someone who is already beginning to lose memory, etcetera. So, this pitching is important right. So, the boss against the other person that contrast is very-very important. How? That is something which we will pay attention too as we move on.

So, with that background in mind and there is another background so which we should bear in mind although, I am not a big fan of biographical readings, but there is a very valid criticism or is a very valid scholarship which says that this particular story quite often, is that Mansfield drew on her own experiences. You know of having lost her own, own brother, Leslie Mansfield you know in the First World War and the boss in this particular story, "The Fly", is often said to be drawn on Mansfield's own father.

You know again someone who was apparently very-very domineering and a complete patriarch and the patriarchal quality of the boss is important, because he seems to be the embodiment of high patriarchy, high handed patriarchy and obviously, the entire story is told from a feminist perspective.

Although, there are no women at all in the story which is interesting, the woman had a very conspicuous presence, conspicuous absence sorry, in the story except when they are mentioned a couple times as minor characters, as secondary and even tertiary characters right, but they are very much there despite their absence in the story, they are very much there around the story. So that the whole perspective becomes important and men who inhabit the center of the story, they actually end up being decimated, end up being quite fragile as we see in due course, but let us take the opening of the story.

At the opening as I mentioned, it carries this deceptive sense of superiority, this deceptive sense of supremacy, which very quickly reveals to be fragile and superficial in quality.

So, here we are "The Fly", Katherine Mansfield and the opening of the story is thus and this should be on your screen. 'Y' are very snug in here, piped old Mister Woodifield, and peered out of his great, green leather armchair by his friend the boss's desk as a baby peers out of his pram. So, the entire focalization as a verb, the character through which through his perspective the entire story is revealed at the beginning, opened up at the beginning is a character called Mister Woodifield and Woodifield we are told is staring out of his great, green leather armchair.

So, the armchair is important and he is looking at the boss and he is complementing the boss and his comfortable situation, you are very snug in here piped old Mister Woodifield and peered out of his great, green leather armchair by his friend the boss's desk as a baby peers out of his pram and the last image is important, we find that

increasingly Woodifield is infantilized and infantilization of Woodifield is indicated by the different baby images, baby metaphors he is equated with so the great, green leather armchair that he is sitting in seems to be too big for him and he is having to peer out of it as a baby peers out of his perambulator right. So, the baby image is important and this obviously, is equating senility with infantilization.

His talk was over; it was time for him to be off. But he did not want to go. Since he had retired, since his stroke, the wife and the girls kept him boxed up in the house every day of the week except Tuesday. So, we are told, we are given some background information about Woodifield that since he retired and since he had a stroke so obviously, he is been socially and biologically you know dysfunctional for a long time, because he is retired, he cannot make any more money, he is not productive anymore, socially speaking, professionally speaking.

So his professional productivity is gone and the same time we are told he is had a stroke which is to say he is biologically also unproductive, he is biologically also quite unhealthy.

So, he is essentially someone who is just waiting to die. He is waiting to come to an end, he has got nothing to offer in terms of professional productivity and also in terms his biological health right. So, since his stroke his wife and his girls kept him boxed up in a house every day of the week except Tuesday.

So, we are told again he is boxed up in the house, he is confined in the house and this whole idea of being confined is important, because what it does is it reverses entire gender dynamics away, because we know for a long time the confinement was a very standard quote unquote medical cure for female hysterics and female hysterics were confined to their houses obviously, by male doctors, who would look at hysteria as a female malady. So, the whole idea of confinement is reversed over here right and that becomes important reversal.

So he is confined in his house every day of the week except Tuesday by his wife and his daughters. So on Tuesday, he was dressed and brushed and allowed to cut back to the City for the day. So, again look at the verbs, he was dressed and brushed, just like a child would be dressed and brushed.

So, again there is an infantilization of Woodifield continuing over here. So, he is dressed and brushed and he is allowed to cut back to the City for the day.

So, the word allowed is important, because it is often equated with agency so, whoever allows something often obviously, has agencies. If I allow someone to do something it means I have the agency, which I am conferring to the other person. So, the wife and the girls away assumes, they have the agency to allow Woodifield to do something which he is otherwise forbidden to do.

So, what is he allowed to? He is allowed to cut back to the city for the day, he is allowed to come to the city for one day of the week which is Tuesday and this happens to be a Tuesday as well. Although, what he did there the wife and girls could not imagine. Made a nuisance of himself to his friends, they supposed. Well, perhaps so. All the same, we cling to our last pleasures as the tree clings to its last leaves. So, again the tree metaphor is important as a dying tree, clinging on to some last leaf. So, Woodifield is increasingly and consistently equated with a dying organism with something coming to an end. So, senility of Woodifield is something which is emphasized over and over again.

So, he is equated with the dying tree, which is clinging on to its last leaves, in the same way as a dying man who is clinging on to his last pleasures, you know and this would be you know coming and seeing old friends in the city okay.

So, there sat old Woodifield, smoking a cigar and staring almost greedily at the boss, who rolled in his office chair, stout, rosy, five years older than he and still going strong, still at the helm. It did one good to see him right. So, again the whole idea of the boss is projected in front of Woodifield and we see the boss for the first time through Woodifield's eyes. How does the boss look like? So there sat old Woodifield and he is looking greedily at the boss.

So, he also has his greedy gaze on the boss, because he seems to be healthier and rosier and most stout than Woodifield. Despite being five is older than him and this becomes interesting, because biological age over here seems to have nothing to do with the social age that the boss seems to enjoy and the social age of privilege he is obviously in a very privileged position. Woodifield in contrast is in a very-very underprivileged position, because of his ill health, right. It did one good to see him.

Wistfully, admiringly, the old voice added, 'It is snug in here, upon my word!' So, again snug being comfortable, see he is complimenting the boss over and over again on this comfortable location and obviously, the comfortable location is not as a physical location, but also as the social location right. So, the world seems to be you know socially situated in a very comfortable and privileged place and the fact that he is called the boss is indicative of that.

'Yes, it is comfortable enough,' agreed the boss, and he flipped the Financial Times with the paper knife. So, again this whole idea of flipping, opening the Financial Times with a paper knife becomes very robust manly maneuver. He is opening the Financial Times with one you know swoop of the paper knife, one cut of the paper knife and, obviously, the Financial Times becomes in as a newspaper for financial information, as a newspaper for the share market.

So, it is a very-very quote unquote manly newspaper, is what men read, because men make money and men invest money on different shares and men control the market. So, the whole idea of the masculinist consumption becomes important over here with the arrival of the Financial Times.

So, obviously, the paper knife with which he opens it up is here a phallic instrument. So, he opens the Financial Times with a paper knife. As a matter of fact he was proud of his room; he liked to have it admired, especially by old Woodifield. It gave him a feeling of deep, solid satisfaction to be planted there in the midst of it in full view of that frail old figure in the muffler.

So, again Woodifield becomes a very handy contrast to the boss, a very handy visual contrast to the boss, because what he is saying is that in comparison to Woodifield, he feels very big; he feels very amplified; he feels very magnified and that amplification and magnification is something which is obviously feeding his male ego. It is masculinist presence of privilege.

So, he feels great, it gives some sense were solid satisfaction, almost tangible almost tactile sense of satisfaction in comparison to the frail old figure in the muffler which is obviously, a very—he looks like a mummy, is he someone he is an almost zombie like Woodifield, he is frail, he is old, has almost shrunk into his muffler and muffler becomes more important than his face which is literally shrunk in size, biologically

speaking and compared to which the boss is stout rosy healthy and he enjoys the position of difference which is also position of privilege.

So, privileged which, which is generated out of difference compared to Woodifield. 'I have had it done up lately,' he explained, as he had explained for the past how many weeks. So, again he is beginning to now tell, what he is done to the office in terms of repairing it. 'New carpet,' and he pointed to the bright red carpet with a pattern of large white rings. 'New furniture,' and he nodded towards the massive bookcase and a table with legs like twisted treacle. 'Electric heating!' He waved almost exultantly towards the five transparent, pearly sausages glowing so softly in the tilted copper pan.

So, he is showing off his new furniture, new gadgets, new carpet, new furniture, electric heating. Obviously, he is surrounding himself with a lot of comfort, lot of material comfort, but also and equally this sense of being comfortable, this sense of comfort or comfortable location is very much a part of his embodiment of the boss.

So, embodiment in the story could be seen as something which is obviously biological. He is stout, rosy and healthy compared to Woodifield, but also he is something more social and more extended. He has got new furniture; he has got new heating; he has got new you know bookcase around him he has got and everything is around him is new and the carpet too is new and all that newness around him gives him an architecture of superiority, an architecture of an embodiment of privilege, an embodiment of superiority, and obviously, strength compared to Woodifield. It is very relative kind of an embodiment, but that is something he is enjoying compared to Woodifield.

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Wistfully, admiringly, the old voice added, "It's snug in here, upon my word!"

'Yes, it's comfortable enough,' agreed the boss, and he flipped the *Financial Times* with a paper-knife. As a matter of fact he was proud of his room; he liked to have it admired, especially by old Woodfield. It gave him a feeling of deep, solid satisfaction to be planted there in the midst of it in full view of that frail old figure in the muffler.

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But he did not draw old Woodfield's attention to the photograph over the table of a grave-looking boy in uniform standing in one of those spectral photographers' parks with photographers' storm-clouds behind him. It was not new. It had been there for over six years.

'There was something I wanted to tell you,' said old Woodfield, and his eyes grew dim remembering. 'Now what was it? I had it in my mind when I started out this morning.' His hands began to tremble, and patches of red showed above his beard.

Poor old chap, he's on his last pins, thought the boss. And, feeling kindly, he winked at the old man, and said jokingly,

'I tell you what, I've got a little drop of something here that'll do you good before you go out into the cold again. It's beautiful stuff. It wouldn't hurt a child.' He took a key off his watch-chain, unlocked a cupboard below his desk, and drew forth a dark, squat bottle. 'That's the medicine,' said he. 'And the man from whom I got it told me on the strict Q.T. it came from the cellars at Windsor Castle.'

<http://www.apress.com/resources/online-short-stories-the-fs>



But he did not draw old Woodifield's attention to the photograph over the table of a grave-looking boy in uniform standing in one of those spectral photographers' parks with photographers' storm-clouds behind him. It was not new. It had been there for over six years. Again, so the whole idea of the 'but' becomes important, because the 'but' is the reversal of what we have seen so far. So, till this point we are told the boss is surrounding himself with new gadgets, new furniture, new heating, new bookcase, etcetera.

But, there was a big ‘but’ and that is he is not drawing Woodifield’s attention to something else in this room, which is presumably not new and it is a grave looking boy’s photograph or photograph of a grave looking boy in uniform standing in one of those spectral photographers’ parks, with photographers’ storm clouds behind them.

So, again the word spectral becomes important as a ghostly quality about the photograph the spectral quality bothered photograph which is to say this becomes an indicator of deadness to a certain extent. Something which is dead, something which lives as a specter at the moment and the boy we are told is a grave looking boy in uniform.

So, it is a soldier's uniform that he is wearing and, obviously, you know the gravity, the seriousness of the boy is also compounded and there is a bit of pun over here. The grave looking boy, who we could also read it as a boy looking towards his grave, grave looking, looking towards grave as a deadly coveting; it smacks of death; it smacks of

decadence; it smacks of something which is exhausted and elevated right and obviously, the specter corroborates that reading, corroborates that you know death-like quality about the photograph.

We are also told it was not new, it have been there for over six years. So, that is something which is a bit of an oddity in this office where everything else seems to be very-very new and very well done up right and compared to that done-up office, he has this one photograph which is six years old photograph, and it is a photograph of a boy looking very grave in a soldier's uniform in a spectral photographers' park.

So, we can see already how Mansfield is using an economy of expression in terms of looking at certain objects and how communicating how this object stand for certain things. So, a newness, the new materials of newness, the markers of newness around the boss—the, obviously, objects of accusation, objects of privilege, objects of superiority. An entire sentiment of superiority is embedded in all these objects, is strewn across all these objects, and compared to that we have the photograph of the boy which is obviously not a marker of superiority.

We do not quite know at this point what it stands for, but we do know that is something that boss is not really showing off. It is something odd about the photograph in this location in that particular office and the reason why the boss is not showing off is revealed to us in a moment.

Ah. 'There was something I wanted to tell you,' said old Woodifield, and his eyes grew dim remembering. 'Now what was it? I had it in my mind, when I started out this morning.' His hands began to tremble, and patches of red showed above his beard.

So, again Woodifield wants to say something to the boss, but the senility of Woodifield is making his presence felt in a very heavy handed way as his hands began to tremble with patches of red showing above his beard. So, again the whole process of remembering becomes a very strenuous activity, very stressful activity for Woodifield.

So, when he is trying to remember something what he ends up doing is shivering and acting very-very senile and his hands were beginning to tremble. So, he tells the boss there was something he wanted to tell him, but he has forgotten about it now and he does not remember what that is.

Now, look at the gaze of the boss over here. The boss gazes at Woodifield in a very condescending, patronizing way and also what he thinks. 'Poor old chap, he is on his last pins,' thought the boss. And feeling kindly, he winked at the old man, and said jokingly.

So, this is a very masculinist, patriarchal you know boy scout-ish kind of a rhetoric over here when you feel pity for someone whose is not as physically strong, someone who is not physically healthy right and immediately in further, the person is about to die if you are an old man and not in control of your motor mechanism it means you are on your last pins, it means you are about to die very-very shortly and the whole idea is conveyed to us in a very condescending way almost humorous way, but obviously, the boss will try and continue to be condescending and it is what he will do subsequently in order to feel more manly compared to Woodifield.

Ah. So, he winked at the old man and said jokingly, what does he say? 'I tell you what. I have got a little drop of something here that will do you good before you go out into the cold again. It is beautiful stuff. It would not hurt a child.' So, he is offering Woodifield alcohol, he is offering Woodifield a beverage of alcohol and he says it is going to be a lot of good. So, before you go out and step out on those cold world outside have a drop of this before you leave. It would not hurt a child. Again, a child metaphor is important, as Woodifield is constantly compared to a child, he is constantly equated with a child metaphor which is obviously, part of his infantilization package okay.

So, and what does the boss do subsequently? He took a key off his watch-chain, unlocked a cupboard below his desk, and drew forth a dark, squat bottle. 'That is the medicine,' said he. 'And the man from whom I got it told me on the strict Q.T. it came from the castle cellars at Windsor Castle.' So, this is a bottle of whiskey which has come from the Windsor castle. Obviously, it becomes a marker of privilege, a marker of royalty, a marker of very limited access right.

So, the boss seems to have a lot of access over things which other people might have limited access to. So, this becomes the whole idea of access and privilege have become increasingly equated with each other in this particular section.

So, he has got it from a Windsor Castle and is presumably is a very-very old bottle of whiskey that he is about to offer to Woodifield.

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The slide displays text from the story 'The Fly' by Katherine Mansfield. The text is as follows:

Old Woodfield's mouth fell open at the sight. He couldn't have looked more surprised if the boss had produced a rabbit.

'It's whisky, ain't it?' he piped feebly.

The boss turned the bottle and lovingly showed him the label. Whisky it was.

'Do you know,' said he, peering up at the boss wonderingly, 'they won't let me touch it at home.' And he looked as though he was going to cry.

'Ah, that's where we know a bit more than the ladies,' cried the boss, swooping across for two tumblers that stood on the table with the water-bottle, and pouring a generous finger into each. 'Drink it down. It'll do you good. And don't put any water with it. It's sacrilege to tamper with stuff like this. Ah!' He tossed off his, pulled out his handkerchief, hastily wiped his moustaches, and cocked an eye at old Woodfield, who was rolling his in his chaps.

The old man swallowed, was silent a moment, and then said faintly, 'It's nutty!'

But it warmed him; it crept into his chill old brain he remembered.

'That was it,' he said, heaving himself out of his chair.

'I thought you'd like to know. The girls were in Belgium last week having a look at poor Reggie's grave, and they happened to come across your boy's. They're quite near each other, it seems.'

Old Woodfield paused, but the boss made no reply. Only a quiver in his eyelids showed that he heard.

On the right side of the slide, there is a video of a man with glasses and a purple shirt speaking.

Old Woodfield's mouth fell open at the sight. He could not have produced; he could not have looked more surprised if the boss had produced a rabbit. So, again the whole idea of awe and wonder and amazement is conveyed to us in almost a very funny way.

Ah, Woodfield's mouth fell open at the sight and it seems to be him that the boss has produced a rabbit right, pulled a rabbit out of his hat.

So, whiskeys are rare to him; whiskeys are forbidden to him; whiskeys are privileged to him compared to saying you know a rabbit pulled out of a hat that would be a magic trick and so, to Woodfield this too is a form of magic in some sense.

'It is whiskey, ain't it?' he piped feebly. The boss turned the bottle and lovingly showed him the label. Whiskey it was. So, again like the Financial Times, like the paper knife, like the electric heating, like the bookcase, like the new furniture, the new carpets, the whiskey bottle over here too becomes a marker of boss's masculinity.

A very privileged consolidated, strong robust masculinity and the robustness in the masculinity is interesting over here, because that is exactly what will be portrayed now and then decimated later.

So, it is whiskey; ain't it? he piped feebly. The boss turned the bottle and lovingly showed him the label. Whiskey it was. 'Do you know,' said he peering up at the boss wonderingly, 'they will not let me touch it at home.' And he looked as though he was

going to cry. So, again, oh I love complaining about the women, the women are forbidding him from drinking whiskey, women take away all access to whiskey, the women take away all access to his outside world which is obviously, reversal of the gender dynamics which is commonly consumed across the world where men control things and women.

But this is what the First World War does. The First World War historically, it destabilized the demographic equation, a demographic map of Europe in particular, because suddenly at the end of war they were very few young men left or rather they were very few able young men left. Most people even came back from the war, they became differently able, they became you know paralyzed in different degrees, they could not function properly.

So, women began to take more agency in social and familial spaces after the First World War. We see over here and we will see continually as a story progresses Woodifield's daughter and what daughters and wives—they seemed to have, they seemed to enjoy more real privilege and more real agency compared to Woodifield, even the boss.

Okay so, they do not allow Woodifield to touch whiskey at home. And he looked as though he was going to cry. So, again the baby metaphor is important, the baby you know the analogy is important as someone who is looking as if he is going to cry in a moment.

'Ah, that is where we know a bit more than the ladies,' cried the boss, swooping down across the two tumblers that stood on the table with the water-bottle, and pouring a generous finger into each.

So, again look at the very offensive and patronizing statement the boss makes about women in general and he says oh the women do not let you touch whiskey at home, that is where we know more than the ladies, this is a medicine right. So, we know it is the medicine, because you know it is a manly thing to acknowledge and talk about.

So, the women forbidding Woodifield from drinking—they are completely sidelined over here and what incident emerges is a boss's agency of giving him the whiskey and wilful consuming not just the whiskey, but also the bosses superiority that is ultimately consumed by Woodifield's point.

‘Drink it down. It will do you good. And do not put any water in it. It is sacrilege to tamper with stuff like this right. So, he is trying he is being a connoisseur of whiskey and he is saying do not put any water into this whiskey, because that is going to dilute everything and that would be amounted to sacrilege. So, do not drink whiskey at all okay, except if you are drinking it directly. So, drink it down it will do you good and do not put any water with it, it is a sacrilege to tamper with the stuff like this.

Ah!’ he tossed off his, pulled out his handkerchief, hastily wiped his moustaches, and cocked an eye and cocked a crooked eye at Woodifield’s attention. Woodifield who was rolling on his last pin now cocked an eye is interesting, because this you can see, it is a very boy scout-ish kind of movement that the boss is exhibiting over here.

It is very manly robust boyish sprightly energetic, he is cocking an eye, he is hastily drinking down his whiskey and he pulled his handkerchief, you know hastily wiped his moustaches say all his motor movements at this point of time are very-very robust and sprightly in quality and his cocking the eye at old Woodifield and he is cocking the eye is important, because it is almost like winking in a very Clint Eastwoodish kind of a way. You know and a very manly robust masculinist kind of a movement the boss is exhibiting and obviously, Woodifield is just the opposite that. He is senile, he is weak, he is not robust at all and he is exhibiting weakness right.

So, we have this weak man compared to this strong man who is, obviously, exhibiting great masculinist strength and also social privilege right and that becomes the whiskey becomes a metaphor of a certain kind of consumption, manly consumption and just before this when we see that the boss very condescendingly saying, the wife and daughters they do not seem to know much about whiskey and drinking and alcohol and that is good for men, because we know more than ladies in the particular aspect.

So, that too becomes a very condescending offensive statement of superiority, which is in continuation of the masculinist narrative that the boss is exhibiting. They form an embodiment which is offensive, dominating and all annoying to a large extent.

The old man swallowed, was silent a moment, and then said faintly, ‘It is nutty!’ But it warmed him; it crept into his chill old brain, he remembered. So, this becomes the turning point in the story with the boss offers Woodifield whiskey and Woodifield drinks down the whiskey, but then that reminds him of what he wanted to tell the boss at the

beginning of the story and this is the beginning of the turning point, reversal as it were in the story.

‘Well that was it,’ he said, heaving himself out of his chair. This is a report he wanted to give to the boss. So, the report which is going to turn the entire story around in terms of mood and sentiment.

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But it warmed him; it crept into his chill old brain he remembered.

‘That was it,’ he said, heaving himself out of his chair.

‘I thought you’d like to know. The girls were in Belgium last week having a look at poor Reggie’s grave, and they happened to come across your boy’s. They’re quite near each other, it seems.’

Old Woodfield paused, but the boss made no reply. Only a quiver in his eyelids showed that he heard.

‘The girls were delighted with the way the place is kept,’ piped the old voice. ‘Beautifully looked after. Couldn’t be better if they were at home. You’ve not been across, have yer?’

‘No, no!’ For various reasons the boss had not been across.

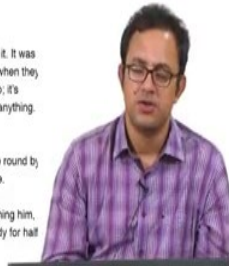
‘There’s miles of it,’ quavered old Woodfield, ‘and it’s all as neat as a garden. Flowers growing on all the graves. Nice broad paths.’ It was plain from his voice how much he liked a nice broad path.

The pause came again. Then the old man brightened wonderfully.

‘You know what the hotel made the girls pay for a pot of jam?’ he piped. ‘Ten francs! Robbery. I call it. It was little pot, so Gertrude says, no bigger than a half-crown. And she hadn’t taken more than a spoonful when they charged her ten francs. Gertrude brought the pot away with her to teach ‘em a lesson. Quite right, too; it’s trading on our feelings. They think because we’re over there having a look round we’re ready to pay anything. That’s what it is.’ And he turned towards the door.

‘Quite right, quite right!’ cried the boss, though what was quite right he hadn’t the least idea. He came round by his desk, followed the shuffling footsteps to the door, and saw the old fellow out. Woodfield was gone.

For a long moment the boss stayed, staring at nothing, while the grey-haired office messenger, watching him, dodged in and out of his cubby-hole like a dog that expects to be taken for a run. Then: ‘I’ll see nobody for half an hour,’ Macey said the boss. ‘Understand! Nobody at all!’



‘I thought you would like to know. The girls were in Belgium last week having a look at poor Reggie’s grave, and happened to come across your boy’s. They are quite near each other, it seems.’ So, the girls meaning the wife and the daughters were in Belgium last week Woodfield tells us and they were taking a look at poor Reggie’s grave. So, Reggie presumably is a son of Woodfield, who died in the First World War and while they were looking at Reggie’s grave, they happened to come by the boss’s son’s grave and they are quite near each other, it seems.

Now, just a bit of a digression over here; it is interesting to know that you know the entire First World War, the experience of First World War, when the war ended, we had something which is now called in a slightly unfortunate way ‘trauma tourism’. In a sense that people would go to different places where their near and dear ones were buried and lost their lives across Europe and visit that place, visit a graveyard, visit the you know monument, which wrote down the names, etcetera.

So, trauma tourism was a big thing after the First World War, which the war itself was a big boom to the tourism industry, because everyone wanted to travel post First World War and look at the places where the war was fought historically important and also more personally, look at the places where people lost their loved ones.

You know people who lost their loved ones in different places across Europe, they would just visit those places as some form of respect giving to the people who died. So, that also worked wonders as it were for tourism industry and they all boomed around this time of the human history after the First World War.

So, and also you can see how the wife and the girls have travelled on their own without any male chaperone, without any male supervision, without any male monitoring. So, again that tells us something about the liberation, the movement, the mobility and as associated agency enjoyed by the woman after the First World War and compared to which we have the two men; one of them is boxed up in his house every day of the week except Tuesday and the other person involved, he has essentially locked himself in his very-very posh and magnificent office right. So, we see how that gets expanded quickly. So, they are quite near each other, it seems.

Old Woodifield paused, but the boss made no reply. Only a quiver in his eyelids showed that he had heard. So, again Mansfield is good at something which we now call not just defamiliarization with by which defamiliarize something which you know already, but also deceleration, slowing down time, suspension time. So, you know the whole idea the boss responding to Woodifield through a little movement in his eye, little quiver in his eyelid. So, that becomes important, it's obviously, the camera zooms in on the quiver of the eyelid of the boss and communicates to us the quiver is happening, which means he is responding to Woodifield's report posthumous report of the boss's son's grave. So, only a quiver in his eyelids show that he had heard.

'The girls were delighted with the way the place is kept,' piped the old voice. 'Beautifully looked after. Could not be better if they were at home. You have not been across, have yer?'

So, again the whole idea of the sublimity of horror becomes important because obviously, the horror is the horror of loss of the loved one, but you know the entire horror site has been aestheticized and a aestheticization of horror, the aestheticization of

the trauma topos that obviously, becomes by the trauma tourism, if people go and consume the death of the loved ones in a various aestheticized sites of consumption.

So, it is all beautifully looked after somewhat like a hotel resort, where all the dead people are put together in one mass of symmetry. Could not be better if they were at home. You have not been across, have yer?' No, no!' For various reasons the boss had not been across. Again look at the vagueness of the statement for various reasons the boss had not been across. So, you know we never quite know at this point why the boss had not travelled. We will get to know why in due course, but we told at this point the boss did not really bother to go all the way. So, he has not been there at the site of his sons grave okay.

Various reasons the boss had not been across. 'There is miles of it,' quavered old Woodifield, 'and it is all as neat as a garden. Flowers growing on all the graves. Nice broad paths.' It was plain from his voice, how much he liked a nice broad path. So, again we look at the aestheticization, the sublimity of entire horror site. We have that nice broad path set up, we have everything put together, manufactured and manicured like a garden.

And there is a garden growing around the graves which is obviously very manicure in quality. So, it is a manicured quality; the orchestrated quality; the aestheticized quality—they all inform the trauma tourism; the trauma narrative which is at play over here okay.

The pause came again. Then the old man brightened wonderfully. 'Do you know what the hotel made the girls pay for a pot of jam?' he piped. 'Ten francs! Robbery, I call it. It was a little pot, so Gertrude says, no bigger than half a crown. And she had not taken more than a spoonful when they charged her ten francs. Gertrude brought away the pot, brought the pot away to teach them a lesson. A quite right, too; it is trading on our feelings.

They think, because we are over there having a look around we are ready to pay anything. That is what it is.' And he turned towards the doors. Again, if you look at it in a rhetorical way, it is a very touristy rhetoric. One tourist mentions this to another tourist, to another potential tourists be careful what you eat, because you will end up being overcharged quite you know rapidly over there.

So, he is saying you know they had to pay ten francs for a very-very decent meal, very modest meal as well and you know they also made them you know buy the pot of jam you know, because they just used it once period and as a result you know Gertrude brought back the jam and she just got it back because she paid for it.

So, the pettiness of it, the great tourist quality about the whole experience where you go and get overcharged, because you use certain things and as an act of revenge you just take away some things which you use, which are meant to be returned to the hotel. So, she brought back this pot of jam in a way to take revenge on the hotel and you know this discussion about the price of jam in Belgium becomes important, because we do not really see accounts of horror, even the graveyards of the boys—Woodifield's boy and the boss's boy. This would be quite aestheticized. They are very beautiful; there are very sublime in quality right and then the rest of the conversation is entirely a sort of monologue entirely brought you know the pot of jam which the girls were forced to buy.

And so, Gertrude brought by the whole jam to teach them a lesson and the last bit is important to say just because they were there having a look around that we are ready to pay anything that is they think that is what it is and they are trading on our feelings.

So, you know the whole thing becomes very ironic in quality over here, because we realize Woodifield does not seem to have much feeling left about the son's death, because he is more concerned talking about the price of jams; he is more concerned talking about the nice broad paths; he is more concerned talking about the aesthetic quality of the entire horror site right and that becomes the key condition over here and as a result of it you know he just keeps talking about different touristy things, different commercial things, etcetera which is got nothing to do with the real experience of horror okay.

So, you know he says that we were ready to pay anything they think, because we were taking a look around and that is like trading on our feelings and he turned towards the door. 'Quite right, quite right!' cried the boss, though what was quite right he had not the least idea. He came round by his desk, followed the shuffling footsteps to the door, and saw the old fellow out. Woodifield was gone.

Now, if we take a look at this point of story from this point, we find the Woodifield's you know departure it begins to begin the fall of the boss in a certain sense, because he

seems less in control of his motor mechanisms, he is less in control of his language and it does not quite understand why he said such a thing as quite right quite right. He is a loss to figure out why he said it.

Now, if you contrast that with the beginning of the story where the boss seems to have complete motor control; complete cognitive control over everything around them. So, that particular controlled, self control in service beginning to give way to a more unstable, more vulnerable self which we see in this particular story. So, he saw the old Woodifield out, he saw the old fellow out, Woodifield was gone.

So, I stop at this point today and we will continue with this in our next lectures, but just to very quickly recap what we have done. This is a story which begins by presenting a very-very supposedly a strong masculinist character, someone who is a patriarch, the grand old boss who has surrounded himself with new machines is obviously, updated himself, he is very switched on with the new gadgets of his times.

He reads the Financial Times, opens it with one swing of a paper knife and offers whiskey to a friend of his who is obviously, in comparison to him dying, in comparison to him very-very weak.

And the reason why he offers whiskey is, because it makes him feel better and greater and stronger right. So, the whiskey consumption becomes a symbolic act. By offering him whiskey, by offering Woodifield whiskey and by consuming it the boss consumes and corroborates his own masculine privileges in his own mind. He is corroborating that through an act of consumption, he is consuming his own masculinist persona and Woodifield, obviously, becomes very handy contrast, a very handy ontological opposite compared to that particular construct right.

So, you know and that, but at this point we feel that you know the moment Woodifield mentions the graveyards, the moment Woodifield mentions Belgium where the daughters and the wife had gone to actually pay the last respect to Reggie, Woodifield son's grave, and as we can see you know we discussed already he has got no feeling at all about the loss of his son and he talks about the commercial entities, the tourist entities which are obviously, irrelevant to the boss.

But what it does is, it opens up the boss, it forces him to think about his own son who too was dead and we are told that their graves are very close to each other, Reggie's grave and the boss's son's grave interestingly like the boss, the son of the boss too he does not have a name which gives an everyman character to the entire, everyone qualities of the entire characters. So, the boss is an everyman patriarch, is an everyman grand old patriarch, the ones that control everything and the son over here becomes a different kind of masculinist package which we will see in due course of time.

So, I stop at this point today and I continue with this lecture, this particular text and hopefully finish this in a couple of more lectures.

Thank you for your attention.