

**Feminist Writings**  
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**Tulips - Part 1**

So, hello and welcome to this NPTEL course entitled called Feminist Writing. We will begin with the new text today. And the new text that we will start with today is a poem Sylvia Plath called Tulips. It is a very complex poem and the reason why we have chosen this for the purpose of this course is that how it looks at the human body, the human self, the human agency from a feminist perspective, of course. Especially when it is situated in a very heavily commodified space, a very heavily reified space, a very heavily dehumanized space. And the space in question over here in this poem is a medical space. The medical space of the hospital.

And the whole experience of being subjected to the medical gaze, whole experience of being dissected by the medical gaze, of being looked at by the medical gaze, of being examined and judged by the medical gaze is very vividly described over here. Now, like all good poems in this genre, in this type of setting, what plugged us in this particular work very interestingly I think is, there was a degree of defamiliarization that is a play over here. Now, what do you mean by defamiliarization? So, the familiar parameters, the familiar metaphors, the family understanding of objects and the semantic significance is dramatically defamiliarized in this poem.

Let's take example of Tulips for the matter. I mean the very title of the poem Tulips. So Tulips or flowers and the flower metaphor in this poem works in a very different way. So normally flowers metaphorically suggest tranquillity, reconciliation, peace, love, romance etc. but over here flowers become signifiers of separation, signifiers of elimination, signifiers of violence and lastly, and most complexly, signifiers of consumption. And the whole idea of been consumed by the gaze, the whole idea of been consumed by your experience becomes interesting in this poem. And among the many things which this poem does, it also talks about very dramatically the sense of... the loss of ownership on yourself.

The loss of ownership on your body, your body as a cognitive mechanism, your body as a cognitive self. Your body as an extended embodiment, so there are two kinds of embodiment in question over here and both are interrupted. One kind of embodiment is embedded embodiment which is inside your body as a neuro-mechanism, the way you think, the way

you behave, the way your body functions up. The other form of embodiment is extended embodiment. How do you navigate with the world around you, around yourself, with the objects around you, the people around you, the language around you, the apparatus around you, the discursive apparatus around you, that's extended embodiment?


And obviously for a normal functional healthy embodiment to take place the extended and the embedded embodiment must be in-sync with each other. So, I am just drawing a little bit on embodiment studies but hopefully that's interesting and useful for the purpose of this particular poem. Now what this poem does is that it talks about how both orders of embodiment are interrupted in different degrees. Especially and not least the idea of extended embodiment the way it should navigate to the world outside. The way the speaker in the poem is situated in the medical space, it's almost immersed in the medical space.

While she begins to lose the sense of ownership on her body, the sense of ownership over her mortal body, cognitive body etc. so the proto self, the mortal self, the cognitive self, the existential self. So, all these different kinds of self's at work over here and they are becoming increasingly out of sync with each other because of this medical experience, because of the entire idea of experientiality at play. Now, a little bit of the biographical background of this poem is interesting perhaps helpful for us to understand and be aware of.

So, Plath wrote this poem on the aftermath of a very tragic miscarriage that she had. I mean she was pregnant with a child and obviously the miscarriage happened very tragically and the trauma of the miscarriage is very much there in this poem has as some kind of a spectral presence and there is a presence of a dead child, a dead being, an unborn being which is there, very probably in this particular poem in a very tragic spectral way. So with this background in mind, with this theory in mind let us dive into the poem and see what it does in terms of the craft, in terms of language, in terms of narrative discourse that it offers us.

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## Tulips

BY SYLVIA PLATH

The tulips are too excitable, it is winter here.  
Look how white everything is, how quiet, how snowed-in.  
I am learning peacefulness, lying by myself quietly  
As the light lies on these white walls, this bed, these hands.  
I am nobody; I have nothing to do with explosions.  
I have given my name and my day-clothes up to the nurses  
And my history to the anesthetist and my body to surgeons.

They have propped my head between the pillow and the sheet-cuff  
Like an eye between two white lids that will not shut.



So, this is Tulips by Sylvia Plath,

The tulips are too excitable; it is winter here.

Look how white everything is, how quiet, how snowed-in.

I am learning peacefulness, lying by myself quietly.

As the light lies on these white walls, this bed, these hands.

I am nobody; I have nothing to do with explosions.

I have given my name and my day-clothes up to the nurses.

And my history to the anaesthetist and my body to surgeons.

So, if we look at the opening stanza, we have the speaker describing the passivity, describing the powerlessness as it gradually unfolds. The very first line, The Tulips are too excitable, they are excitable they are vibrant but then not in a very positive sense. Excitable means they are tending to exploding, tending towards perhaps a sense of destruction perhaps the sense of violence.

It is winter here, winter obviously in a normal western metaphorical understanding is a season of decline, a season of death, the season of non-abundant, the season of infertility. That idea of infertility, that idea of deadness, the idea of decadence is very much there. Especially if you the biographical background in mind. The presence of this miscarriage, the

trauma of the miscarriage, the experience of the miscarriage and the dead child which is very much there in the poem.

And there is a sepulchral quality to the whiteness which follows, a coffin like quality. Look how white everything is, how quiet, how snowed-in. So, whole idea of this snowed in landscape becomes a sepulchral landscape, very sepulchral setting. And that becomes a metaphor, a signifier of deadness as it proceeds, as it dramatize in the poem. And the third line is interesting, 'I am learning peacefulness'. So, the whole idea of having to learn peacefulness is interesting over here. There is a degree of discomfort about this peacefulness. Perhaps there is a degree of anxiety and violence about this peacefulness and then we have, I am nobody; I have nothing to do with explosions.

I have given my name and my day-clothes up to the nurses. And my history to the anaesthetist and my body to surgeons. So, everything is taken away by other people, my name is taken away to the nurses, by the nurses, I have given away my name, I have given away my day clothes, I have slipped into this medical uniform, this patient uniform as it were. In my history, the medical history, my biological history, all my history has been given to the anaesthetist and of course the whole idea of the anaesthetist is important, it becomes a signifier metaphor for numbness. So, I have given away my history to numbness as it were.

The embodiment of numbness which is the anaesthetist over here. And my body to the surgeon. So the entire idea of ownership is at stake over here, your ownership on your body, your ownership on your senses, your ownership on your cognitive control all that is surrendered to the external environment around you, to the people around you, etc. and that act of surrendering your ownership on your body, that act of surrendering your ownership on yourself and your senses becomes a very important experience of liquidation as it were. The idea of the emptied out self or emptying out self which is a gradual decline of the self which is at work over here. So my body is taken over to by the surgeons.

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## Tulips

BY SYLVIA PLATH

The tulips are too excitable, it is winter here.  
Look how white everything is, how quiet, how snowed-in.  
I am learning peacefulness, lying by myself quietly  
As the light lies on these white walls, this bed, these hands.  
I am nobody; I have nothing to do with explosions.  
I have given my name and my day-clothes up to the nurses  
And my history to the anesthetist and my body to surgeons.

They have propped my head between the pillow and the sheet-cuff  
Like an eye between two white lids that will not shut.  
Stupid pupil, it has to take everything in.  
The nurses pass and pass, they are no trouble,  
They pass the way gulls pass inland in their white caps,  
Doing things with their hands, one just the same as another,  
So it is impossible to tell how many there are.

My body is a pebble to them, they tend it as water



And now the next stanza

They have propped my head between the pillow and the sheet-cuff

Like an eye between two white lids that will not shut.

Stupid pupil, it has to take everything in.

The nurses pass and pass, they are no trouble,

They pass the way gulls pass inland in their white caps,

Doing things with their hands, one just the same as another,

So it is impossible to tell how many there are.

So, what we have over here is a description of medical space and look at the...what interesting of the description is what appears to the patient is a degree of bureaucratisation of the medical space, it is a very bureaucratise space. Everything comes and goes in a very routine order, in a very mechanical and there is a degree of dehumanisation at work over here as well.

The nurses don't appear to be humans, the nurses appear to be machines coming and going. Perhaps punching in and punching out at different times, doing their duties etc. so there is no economy of empathy which is established over here between the patient and the nurses, between the medical machinery and the patient immerse in the machinery. And the medical

machinery is precisely this-that machine. So massive medical machine which is continuing to dehumanize and there is no empathy, empathetic connect with the patient and even the patient is reified into an abject of study and object of you know correction as it were.

And in a very interesting sense one might push this back into the very interesting study between state control and medical control. How the body of the citizen, the body of the subject becomes, it comes to be owned by the state, it comes to be owned by the medical machinery of the state which is often in collision with the state machinery which needs to correct sick person, which needs to correct interrupted person, right? And this idea of correction becomes interesting because it is very closely connected to coercion. right?

So, the sick person, the interrupted needs to be coerced back into the healthy being and needs to be corrected by into this healthy being and that of course, that machinery is more often is very very masculinist in quality, very patriarchal in quality. So the whole idea of the whole location of the female body inside this patriarchal massive machinery of medicine becomes very symbolic and structural image which needs to be unpacked particularly in the context of the broader context of this course Feminist Writings.

So, what Plath seems to say over here is, she has a sense of liquidation, she suffers a sense of experience of liquidation as a female patient and this massive machinery which is cutting her in with this medical gaze and with this reified gaze and with this you know the nurses coming and going at different intervals without really making any human intervention and we are very clearly told that it is impossible to tell how many nurses there are because they look just the same as everyone else.

Each person was same as everyone else; they are cut from the same cloth. They wearing uniforms presumably and the whole idea of wearing uniform is meant, is designed to establish a sense of uniformity across in the medical space. That uniformity often undercuts any possibility of human intervention, any possibility of human empathy at work. Now, what has been said over here is "They have propped my head the pillow and the sheet cuff." Again look at the very metonymic quality of description at play over here. The head is described separately, the hands are described separately.

These hands at the beginning, at the very opening stanza we had this idea of these hands and I have this head and now we have pupils like and eye between white lids that will not shut. So images of an eye which is not shutting and the eye not shutting becomes almost mechanical

operation, it's not very human organic quality of seeing something, it's the inorganic, almost machinic way of staring at something. So a difference between looking and seeing or difference between listening and hearing becomes important because listening and seeing these have human qualities. These have a degree of human association about them. They entail human reception, they entail human impression, they entail human perception or human interpretation to some extent.

Whereas if we talk about seeing, if we talk about, sorry, we talk about looking and if we talk about hearing, they have an organic quality about them, it is almost like something is being heard without being listened to. Something is being looked at without been seen. And that has superficial machine inorganic quality about it. Now, what is interesting is the idea of pupil, the eye which takes everything in. So, there is no agency to stop, there is no agency to intervene over here. So, everything has to be taken in whether you want it or not. And that whole idea of having an eye which will not shut, the whole idea of having this organ which is beyond your cognitive control.

It gives you, so underlines and underscores the loss of agency at work over here, the sense of agency lessness at play. And of course then we told the nurses pass and pass they are no trouble. They pass the way girls pass in land in the white camps. So whole idea of the whole panoramic image of girls passing and flying pass in land across seas become important because what's interesting about the image is the temporality and periodic quality or that passing or the girls come and pass in land and pass away. They come and go away and there is no settlement, there is no intervention, there is no human connect, there is no sense of kinship at play over here.

The girls come and pass away, they fly away across in land without really settling in, without really any establishing any kind of kinship organic or otherwise would the land they pass across and similarly the nurses come and pass her. They perhaps do the duties; they perhaps fix her up in different degrees; they perhaps setup the machinery around her at the micro level. However, there is no description of any human conversation, there is no description of human connect or any human empathy at play. And then we're told they are doing things with their hands, so again even the nurses are mytonomized as it were.

They are described in the way which breaks them down into different fragments; they are working with hands, doing things with their hands. One just the same as another, they are

completely replicable, they are replaceable, one looks exactly like the other person and it's a big straight jacket machinery at play. So it's impossible to tell how many there are.


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I have given my name and my day-clothes up to the nurses  
And my history to the anesthetist and my body to surgeons.

They have propped my head between the pillow and the sheet-cuff  
Like an eye between two white lids that will not shut.  
Stupid pupil, it has to take everything in.  
The nurses pass and pass, they are no trouble,  
They pass the way gulls pass inland in their white caps,  
Doing things with their hands, one just the same as another,  
So it is impossible to tell how many there are.

My body is a pebble to them, they tend it as water  
Tends to the pebbles it must run over, smoothing them gently.  
They bring me numbness in their bright needles, they bring me sleep.  
Now I have lost myself I am sick of baggage—  
My patent leather overnight case like a black pillbox,  
My husband and child smiling out of the family photo;  
Their smiles catch onto my skin, little smiling hooks.

I have let things slip, a thirty-year-old cargo boat



And now we're told...

My body is a pebble to them, they tend it as water

Tends to the pebbles it must run over, smoothing them gently.

They bring me numbness in their bright needles, they bring me sleep.

And then we are told this is very interesting because what we are told is the body becomes a pebble to which the water passes. And of course the pebble has no agency in terms of rejecting the water. It can't reject the water, the water must come to the pebble and the pebble just stand stonely and then take the water as it comes to it. Tends to the pebbles it must run over, smoothing them gently. So the comparison between the body with something inanimate as a pebble is interesting because that talks about or that perhaps underlines the inanimate quality of the body itself, the stoney quality of the body. The heavy quality of the body which becomes agency less than quality. The agency less in character.

And interestingly we're told they bring me numbness in their bright needles, and bring me sleep. So whole idea of numbness which was anticipated by the anaesthetist at the beginning is interesting because what numbness does, numbness undercuts the consciousness, numbness undercuts conscious control, numbness undercuts conscious and cognitive control at play. So,



whole idea of making you numb in the medical space liquidate your agency, takes away your agency as it were. And they bring me sleep. So sleep and loss of consciousness or sleep or numbness they become completely quantifiable attributes over here.

So, how much sleep should be given to the patient, how much numbness should be to the patient needs to be measured and mytonomized over here through the bright needles and tablets presumably which are given to her through different degrees. So you know the whole idea of mytonomizing or quantifying something which are, things which are abstract in quality, things which are phenomenal in quality. Sleep is a phenomenal quality something which happens to you in a very organic experiential way. So the point is the whole idea of experientiality, the whole experience of experientiality has been commodified, has been dehumanized, has been quantified in the medical space.

And what happens to an agency, what happens to embodiment how do you negotiate with the world around you in this kind of reified medical space, and this kind of reified medical gaze, what do you respond as a human subject over here or do you completely become a human object a dehumanize object which is what is been described over here a gradual process of dehumanization. A very slow process of dehumanization and the violence is very slow the violence is very very you know gradual in quality. But that makes it more menacing as well.

And now we are told...

Now I have lost myself I am sick of baggage——

My patent leather overnight case like a black pillbox,

My husband and child smiling out of the family photo;

Their smiles catch onto my skin, little smiling hooks.

So, this is the beginning of the phase where it becomes more and more synesthetic in quality. And by synesthetic I mean obviously an illusion to synesthesia which is very interesting cognitive mixture of different senses. So you know typically synesthetic condition tactility and visuality can come together.

So you can almost get a feel that you are touching something that you're seeing, at the same time or you're hearing something that you're seeing at the same time. So that will come together and make you and give you this synesthetic, super sensory experience is obviously a

very high phenomenal quality. Now, interestingly what synesthesia also does is that it defamiliarize your normal cognitive narrative as it were. Your normal cognitive control and obviously the person over here, the patient over here, the human subject over here is an interrupted subject is somebody who has been interrupted out of normal functioning machinery.

And of course the whole presence of the dead child becomes important; the miscarriage becomes very important, subtext behind this whole experience. Now interestingly she compares herself as a baggage.

I have lost myself I am sick of baggage——

My patent leather overnight case like a black pillbox,

My husband and child smiling out of the family photo;

Their smiles catch onto my skin.

So again the site of the photo and the tactility of the smile becomes important, you can almost the smiles and they are so common, cling on you like smiling hooks. Hooks obviously become hunting metaphor, fishing metaphor with which fishes are caught and that becomes interesting because gives a sense of being caught, gives a sense of being captured to a very tactile experience. Right, so the site of the smile and the tactility of the smile they come together in a very interesting and in a very cognitive complex manner.

And now we have more metaphors coming in.

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My body is a pebble to them, they tend it as water  
Tends to the pebbles it must run over, smoothing them gently.  
They bring me numbness in their bright needles, they bring me sleep.  
Now I have lost myself I am sick of baggage—  
My patent leather overnight case like a black pillbox,  
My husband and child smiling out of the family photo;  
Their smiles catch onto my skin, little smiling hooks.

I have let things slip, a thirty-year-old cargo boat  
stubbornly hanging on to my name and address.  
They have swabbed me clear of my loving associations.  
Scared and bare on the green plastic-pillowed trolley  
I watched my teaset, my bureaus of linen, my books  
Sink out of sight, and the water went over my head.  
I am a nun now, I have never been so pure.

I didn't want any flowers, I only wanted  
To lie with my hands turned up and be utterly empty.  
How free it is, you have no idea how free—



I have let things slip, a thirty-year-old cargo boat  
stubbornly hanging on to my name and address.

So, the whole idea of comparing the body with the cargo boat is interesting and that is very suggestive as well because what that tells you is that it's not just ordinary vessel, it's not a adventurous glamorous vessel of exploration of adventure or glory or heroism. It's a vessel that carries a lot of cargo, it's a vessel that carries lot of luggage. And that idea of carrying a lots of luggage becomes important because that wears you down or that deadency that slows you down. And that sense of deceleration, that sense of decadence, the sense of being slowed down by time, and the density of time as it were, becomes important at this particular image. A thirty-year-old cargo boat, so she is comparing her 30-year-old self with the 30-year-old cargo boat. So again we have a sense of objectification and dehumanization at work.

Stubbornly hanging on to my name and address.

They have swabbed me clear of my loving associations.

Scared and bare on the green plastic-pillowed trolley

I watched my teaset, my bureaus of linen, my books

Sink out of sight, and the water went over my head.

I am a nun now; I have never been so pure.

So, the whole drowning image keeps coming back in the poem which gives a speaker a failure like quality, a failure being the (( ))(20:34) kill us all by drowning. And so the whole idea of drowning into numbness, the whole idea of drowning and do agency lessness, the whole idea of drowning into purposelessness becomes very important in the context of this poem.

And they have swabbed me so the whole idea of they and me, the binary between they and me becomes important over here. They have swabbed me clear of my loving association so I have been cut off from my loving association completely. Scared and bare on the green plastic-pillowed trolley I watched my teaset, my bureaus of linen, my books, so again a very mundane metaphor, intimate objects, objects of intimacy, objects of association, tea set, linen, bureaus of linen, my books. So things which you are associated with personally that becomes very important, that personal association that personal economy of personal association becomes important over here.

But that economy and that narrative of associations sink out of site we're told. It drowns completely that degree of, that entire economy of associations dissolves away completely. I know that makes a bare, that makes a naked spiritually. And then she compares herself with a nun. The water went over my head, so that is the idea of water going over the head. Again there is a very interesting illusion a very complex illusion to the miscarriage of losing the baby of, you know being flushed out or being pushed out of the experience and also the trauma of losing the child becomes important.

I am a nun now; I have never been so pure. So this is very interesting transition from being the mother to the nun becomes interesting because the whole idea of being nun over here, entails in this particular context, it entails a sense of being emptied out of association, being emptied out by familial associations of kinship any idea of kinship is been done away completely. And I have never been so pure, so the whole idea of purity becomes important over here, there is a you know a purgatory quality of purity over here which also entails a sense of violence perhaps.

You can only come to this purity through violence, through lost, through been nun, through been completely cleansed of all associations as it were. So that degree of eraser, that degree of closure, that degree of being cleansed and purged away from all associations become, becomes quiet palpably present in this particular context. So, the word nun and the word pure

again these are generally associated with positivity, with transcendence, with you know the sense of rebirth and regeneration but over here they have more complex associations.

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Tends to the pebbles it must run over, smoothing them gently.  
They bring me numbness in their bright needles, they bring me sleep.  
Now I have lost myself I am sick of baggage——  
My patent leather overnight case like a black pillbox,  
My husband and child smiling out of the family photo;  
Their smiles catch onto my skin, little smiling hooks.

I have let things slip, a thirty-year-old cargo boat  
stubbornly hanging on to my name and address.  
They have swabbed me clear of my loving associations.  
Scared and bare on the green plastic-pillowed trolley  
I watched my teaset, my bureaus of linen, my books  
Sink out of sight, and the water went over my head.  
I am a nun now, I have never been so pure.

I didn't want any flowers, I only wanted  
To lie with my hands turned up and be utterly empty.  
How free it is, you have no idea how free——  
The peacefulness is so big it dazes you,

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49013/tulips-56d22ab68fdd0>



Okay, I didn't want any flowers, I only wanted

To lie with my hands turned up and be utterly empty.

How free it is, you have no idea how free——

The peacefulness is so big it dazes you,

Right so whole idea of being dazed by peacefulness becomes important because what we are told is peacefulness becomes almost an object over here. Peacefulness becomes almost a metaphor of possession. So she is possessed by peacefulness in a way which is violent which is almost visceral in quality and that viscosity, that violence becomes very very important over here especially in the context of in the loss of agency which is been talked about which is been talked about, which is been described.

Okay, so the whole idea of not wanting flowers and despite of getting flowers is important because what she seems to say that is I can't reject, I don't have the option to say no. So, the flowers come in and they seem to possess me with the peacefulness and this peacefulness is violent in quality as I said. And then the idea of being utterly empty is important as well. That's of course is connected to the idea of liquidation or the liquidity itself that is being talked about constantly in this poem. Okay so the peacefulness is so big it dazes you, it just

completely makes you something else, it unsettles you cognitively. It unsettles you essentially and phenomenally.


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And it asks nothing, a name tag, a few trinkets.  
It is what the dead close on, finally; I imagine them  
Shutting their mouths on it, like a Communion tablet.

The tulips are too red in the first place, they hurt me.  
Even through the gift paper I could hear them breathe  
Lightly, through their white swaddlings, like an awful baby.  
Their redness talks to my wound, it corresponds.  
They are subtle : they seem to float, though they weigh me down,  
Upsetting me with their sudden tongues and their color,  
A dozen red lead sinkers round my neck.

Nobody watched me before, now I am watched.  
The tulips turn to me, and the window behind me  
Where once a day the light slowly widens and slowly thins,  
And I see myself, flat, ridiculous, a cut-paper shadow  
Between the eye of the sun and the eyes of the tulips,  
And I have no face, I have wanted to efface myself.



And it asks nothing, a name tag, a few trinkets.

It is what the dead close on, finally; I imagine them

Shutting their mouths on it, like a Communion tablet.

And this very Christian metaphor communion tablet, the communion bread which is shared by believers in a table becomes important over here, comes important over here. Because that idea of communion consumption, the whole idea coming together consuming a table also entails a sense of closure over here because there is a dead which is being talked about who are being talked about here, the many dead people, the dead presence in the room and of course the obvious reference could be to the dead child, the unborn child over here. So, the dead close on and finally I imagine them shutting their mouths on it like a communion tablet. So, a dead close on peacefulness like a communion tablet and the whole idea of peacefulness becoming, flushed out body which is then consumed by the dead and then to wish through through that consumption the dead come arrive at a closure is what is been suggested over here.

So we have very very morbid metaphors at work over here so what has been appropriated, a Christian metaphor, biblical illusions and then of course there is this recontextualize and tied into the human experience over here, the personal experience over here. Right? So, the sense

of closure, the sense of consumption become intimately tie to each other in this particular context. And now we have the reference to the tulips at work.

The tulips are too red in the first place, they hurt me.

Even through the gift paper I could hear them breathe

Lightly, through their white swaddlings, like an awful baby.

So, you know the whole idea the awful baby becomes important, the unborn baby or the dead baby is a constant presence in the poem and we have told that the Tulips are too red. So the redness of the tulips becomes important because it can also be suggested, they can also be suggestive of the redness of our own body, our own loss, our own trauma, our own injury, our own wound which was caused by the during the process of losing the child. So that becomes very interestingly dialoguing with the redness of the tulips which are situated right across the room. And that kind, that makes up viscerally uncomfortable that generates a sort of visceral violence of here. They hurt me.

Even through the gift paper I could hear them breathe

Lightly, through their white swaddlings, like an awful baby.

Their redness talks to my wound, it corresponds.

So again we're talking about a dialoguing quality over here the redness of the tulips and the redness of her own body they become very interestingly and perhaps perversely dialoguing with each other in a way which makes her very very unsettled and traumatized. It corresponds.

They are subtle: they seem to float, though they weigh me down,

Upsetting me with their sudden tongues and their color,

A dozen red lead sinkers round my neck.

So, again the whole idea of drowning becomes important, the drowning image becomes important over here. The tulips they seem to float around here they tulips they tulips seem to way her down and they upset here with their sudden tongues and the color.

So you know again tactility and visuality come together in a very synaesthetic quality, in a very quality in a synaesthetic condition, sudden tongue touching her as it were, the colors screaming out of the tulips. The redness coming a trigger for the traumatic memory as it were. And the tulips become a dozen red lead sinkers around my neck so the whole idea of drowning body becomes important the tulip come across to her perceived by her in a cognitive frame as red lead sinkers which will drown her gradually. That image of drowning again gives a failure like quality to this particular character.

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Their redness talks to my wound, it corresponds.  
They are subtle : they seem to float, though they weigh me down,  
Upsetting me with their sudden tongues and their color,  
A dozen red lead sinkers round my neck.

Nobody watched me before, now I am watched.  
The tulips turn to me, and the window behind me  
Where once a day the light slowly widens and slowly thins,  
And I see myself, flat, ridiculous, a cut-paper shadow  
Between the eye of the sun and the eyes of the tulips,  
And I have no face, I have wanted to efface myself.  
The vivid tulips eat my oxygen.

Before they came the air was calm enough,  
Coming and going, breath by breath, without any fuss.  
Then the tulips filled it up like a loud noise.  
Now the air snags and eddies round them the way a river  
Snags and eddies round a sunken rust-red engine.  
They concentrate my attention, that was happy  
And I have no face, I have wanted to efface myself.



Nobody watched me before, now I am watched.

The tulips turn to me, and the window behind me.

Where once a day the light slowly widens and slowly thins,

And I see myself, flat, ridiculous, a cut-paper shadow.

Between the eye of the sun and the eyes of the tulips.

And I have no face, I have wanted to efface myself.

The vivid tulips eat my oxygen.

Now, again the whole idea of being washed becomes important. It is an example of medical surveillance, it is an example of the medical gaze which we know by now is a very extremely



reifying gaze, it reifies human self, it cuts it down to an object, it cuts it down to a symptom to a disease which needs to be corrected.

An object an interrupt of the dysfunctional object, dysfunctional machine which needs to become functional again that's the whole point of the gaze. The whole condition, the quality of the gaze at play. The tulips turn to me, and the window behind me. Where once a day the light slowly widens and slowly thins. So the window becomes luminal frame between darkness and light, the window becomes luminal frame between day and night. So the window becomes almost spatial temporal in quality. It is the space the window and at the same time it is also pointed to time.

So, the spatial temporal quality of the windows is important for us to understand. And also luminosity of experience of looking at the window. So the window becomes a space, a marker for that space which also becomes appointed to time, that changes in time. And the window becomes only indication to her. The only reflection of change in time, a slowly moving time around her. So, there is a degree of density about this time, there is a degree of thickening about this time. Time in the sense of thickened, time in the sense of become dense over here, slowed down, decelerated. And that corresponds to the deceleration of her experience, of her interrupted experience of her interrupted body.

Between the eye of the sun and what she sees in that kind of context is I see myself, flat, ridiculous, a cut-paper shadow. So the degree of superficiality becomes important over here. And that is connected to embodiment and that superficiality is also connected to superfluity so the flatness is a superficiality, the ridiculousness is superfluity and they are connected together in the sense of loss of embodiment suffered by the speaker over here. I see myself, flat, ridiculous, a cut-paper shadow, this is the example of de-embodiment. So, you lose your sense of self, you become a flat object with no dimension, with no cognitive dimension at play.

Between the eye of the sun and the eyes of the tulips.

And I have no face, and I have wanted to efface myself.

The vivid tulips eat my oxygen.

So between the eye of sun and the eye of the tulips which you know temporal, spatial temporal setting could be the window and the tulips. So either sun could be the window

through which the sun comes in and you know she departs the room and either tulip is in the other end of the room and so between these two points she is situated. It can also be come other way, the eye of the sun and the eye of the tulip could be the macro gaze and the micro gaze, the bigger wider all-consuming gaze and the more intimate menace in gaze which is in the room. So you know and she is situated between this two orders of gaze.

So both the ways it is equally valid.

And I have no face, I have wanted to efface myself.

The vivid tulips eat my oxygen.

So, I have no face I have become a faceless creature. And I wanted to efface myself so there could be an illusion to the possibility of suicide. The intension of killing yourself but at the same time she wants to do away with herself, her own self of agency, her ownership on her own self. So, I wanted to efface myself. And also you can turn it around and read it some other way by saying that you know this idea of effacing yourself could also be subversive act. That I wanted to do away with all the faces given to me by society as a woman, so I want to do away with all that faces. I want to efface myself in that way. So that effacing and that reading becomes a subversive act, that becomes a genetic act.

So both ways it is equally valid at play over here. The vivid tulips eat my oxygen. So, again the whole idea of tulips eating her oxygen becomes important becomes. This becomes an active consumption, the tulips have almost had a carnivorous, cannibalistic quality over here. And they eat away her life, widely, eat away what really vital for assistance and the loss of vitality the loss of what is vital for her is further example of liquidation that the poem constantly dramatise. So, we will stop at this point today and we will continue with the text in the next lecture thank you for your attention.