

**Feminist Writings**  
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**The Fly – Part 3**

So hello and welcome to this NPTEL course entitled Feminist Writing, we were looking at Katherine Mansfield short story The Fly, we have had already few lectures in this story and we began to wind up this particular text, now we are moving into, with this lecture today we are moving into really climatic part of the story.

The text and we examine and hopefully unpack how this is important for us, for the purpose of this course on Feminist writing. And how does it play up, different performative qualities of gender, and how the stereotypical notions about gender problematize in this particular section. Now we have see how the figure of the boss for this instance is obviously a figure of authority, a figure of privilege, at the beginning of the story he seems to enjoy little privilege, he seems to enjoy assert articulate authority.

In complete contrast we have Woodifield, who is fragile, weak, senile, and who has difficulty remembering etc. And then of course we have little objects, little signifiers such as Whisky, the Financial times, the uh paper knife, the new furniture, etc, and we have the boss office, Woodifield whisky, and after Woodifield drinks the whisky he remembers what he wanted to tell the boss.

And then we get to know as readers in the story, that this is actually a story about mourning fathers. Fathers who are mourning uh the death of their sons in the war. And then we get to know Woodifield had son, uh and he lost the son in the way, and now his son is buried in a grave in Belgium, and you know that interestingly, that burial site is visited by not Woodifield but by his wife and daughters.

Whereas boss and Woodifield had never been there, presumably, the boss had never been to that particular graveyard. Woodifield tells the boss and through that we get to know that the boss too had lost his son in the war, uh something which we did not know before, although there was this

interesting hint at the beginning of the story, where there was this mention of the spectral photograph, in the boss's desk.

So among all the other new things which the boss had, you know surrounding himself with, there was this very odd photograph of the boy in the uniform which was there in the boss's office. So now it makes sense, now it adds up, now we get to know that the boss too had lost his son in the war. Now Woodfield delivers that information that you know that Woodfield's son, the boss's son are buried together in the same grave.

And then it is beautifully looked after and the wife and the girls went there and then interestingly we also saw how, uh the disclosure of the particular conversations changed from Woodfield's perspective and that they are talking about the pedal side that, graveyard as some kind of touristy spot, he talks about the for instance the price of jams in hotels in Belgium and then we need, we find out, we connect that with something called as trauma tourism, the entire idea of people moving and travelling to different parts of the world to see the you know the graveyards, the beadle sides of their beloved ones, which was something which began to boom after the first world war.

So as we know the the tourism industry really took off after the first world war when people travelling different parts of the world to see the beadle sights of their beloved ones. And in this case we have the Woodfield's daughter's and wife going to Belgium to take a look at their son's grave, Reggie grave.

And boss obviously has never been there, now what is interesting in the story from this point is how boss begins to assign a degree of privilege to his loss, that becomes part of the masculinity package of the boss, then we get to see from the story that how the boss considers his loss, the father has lost his son to be a very unique loss, to be a very very profound loss and there is a degree of masculinity and privilege that is associated with the loss and he tells himself that he can never live his loss down, that he can never forget or un-remember the death of his son.

So death of his son will stay in his mind forever as fresh trauma, so in a very interesting sense there is an equation over here between trauma and privilege. So the fact that the boss can still experience the trauma even after six years, the fact that father can still experience the loss even

after six years, that exponentially, that ability to experience becomes a market of privilege, becomes a pointer to privilege.

So that is something when the story begins to unfold and dramatize, at this particular section. So before we move on, we dive into the text which we will in a minute, it is important to understand the disclose at work over here, the gender to disclose the work over here.

Because normally and stereotypically, in stereotypical imagination, and stereotypical gendered imagination, hysteria is classified or associated with female condition, or the female disease, you know there was a disclose of disease at the womb for instance, something which can only happen to people with womb, so there was definitely feminized as a disease, so the medical equation of hysteria, the medicalization of hysteria, and the feminization of hysteria happened together at different points of time.

But what we have over here is interesting, because the boss at this point of the story, he wants to orchestrate the hysteria, he wants to control his hysteria, he wants to cry at will, he wants to control his hysteria, he wants to cry at will, he wants to weep at will. So this idea of controlling the hysteria, this idea of hystericizing himself at will in a performativity capacity that becomes part of the masculinity, or the masculine agency of the boss.

Right so this is what I mean when I say that there is degree of, there is degree of trauma and agency over here at work. And that is something which we need to bear in mind before we read the story. But that is part of the masculinity package, that is part of the gendered performance in this particular story, that the boss you know considers himself to be manly enough, not to forget the loss of his son, not to forget the trauma of his son and he considers himself manly enough to weep at will, to historicize himself at will.

So that consideration, that (( ))(6:17) considers himself to be manly because he can perform trauma, because he can perform the hysteria, because he can perform moaning, so that is a very complex equation at play over here. So the performance of hysteria, the performance of moaning, becomes part of the masculinity performance over here.

So the contrast that the boss would love to project in his fantasy that the fact that Woodifield has clearly moved on, Woodifield has clearly lived the lost down, he cannot talk about his you know the price of jam, in the hotels near the graveyard, the trauma is not in Woodifield's mind any more is because Woodifield is annotated, Woodifield is exhausted, Woodifield is not man or manly enough.

But for the boss, it is in his own mind, he can never live the lost down, he can never not remember the originality of the trauma, he can never not remember the fresh content, the fresh quality of the trauma, it will be forever fresh in his mind. But that becomes part of the hubris, or you can say masculine arrogance that the boss happens to have in this point of the story, the fact that you know he is just, considering his trauma, or his experience of loss to be unique, in a way that it can never be lifted down, it can never be you know overcome in that sense.

So you know hysteria becomes very much an orchestrated performance, and the orchestra of hysteria is very important over here, because that's what the boss wants to do, he shuts himself down completely, he instructs his messenger, or secretary, whoever that is we never quite know, Macey, he instructs him that he will see no body for half an hour, and then he closes himself down and then he arranges to weep. And that's what the narrative says over here which should be on your screen.

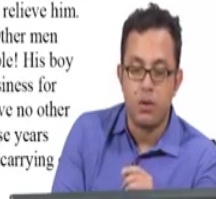
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taken for a run. Then: 'I'll see nobody for half an hour, Macey,' said the boss. 'Understand! Nobody at all.'

'Very good, sir.'

The door shut, the firm heavy steps recrossed the bright carpet, the fat body plumped down in the spring chair, and leaning forward, the boss covered his face with his hands. He wanted, he intended, he had arranged to weep....

It had been a terrible shock to him when old Woodfield sprang that remark upon him about the boy's grave. It was exactly as though the earth had opened and he had seen the boy lying there with Woodfield's girls staring down at him. For it was strange. Although over six years had passed away, the boss never thought of the boy except as lying unchanged, unblemished in his uniform, asleep for ever. "My son!" groaned the boss. But no tears came yet. In the past, in the first months and even years after the boy's death, he had only to say those words to be overcome by such grief that nothing short of a violent fit of weeping could relieve him. Time, he had declared then, he had told everybody, could make no difference. Other men perhaps might recover, might live their loss down, but not he. How was it possible! His boy was an only son. Ever since his birth the boss had worked at building up this business for him; it had no other meaning if it was not for the boy. Life itself had come to have no other meaning. How on earth could he have slaved, denied himself, kept going all those years without the promise for ever before him of the boy's stepping into his shoes and carrying where he left off?



The door shut, the firm heavy steps recrossed the bright carpet, the fat body plumped down in the spring chair... and leaning forward, the boss covered his face with his hands, he wanted, he intended, he had arranged to weep.

Look at the flow of verbs over here, which is interesting he wanted, he desired to weep, so there is degree of argentic quality about it. He intended, so there is degree of intentionality about it, and he had arranged to weep. So there is very interesting artificially designed quality to his weeping, so the fact that he had surrounded himself with objects and then he has shut himself down in office space, and now is designed himself in a way that he can weep, so he arranged to weep.

So there is argentic quality, there is intentional quality, and of course there is artificially performativity quality of weeping, which is dramatized over here.

It had been terrible shock to him when old Woodfield sprang that remark upon him about the boys the grave. It was exactly as though the earth had opened and he had seen the boy lying there with the Woodfield's girls staring at him.

So again this becomes a very important visual signifier, that Woodfield's girls, the wife and daughter staring down at the boys grave, bosses boys grave and the grave opening up becomes

almost a poignant symbol and that may be connected to the masculinity crises that the boss happens to have at this point of time.

The father is gazed high by the women, the father is gazed at by women who are looking at dead male corpse. So that becomes a very interesting visual signify of masculinity crises which obviously connects to the boarded narrative of loss in the first world war.

So this particular image is useful and helpful and we need to revisit it as in we destroy. So as if we see the boy lying there were Woodfield's girls straying down at him. It was strange, although over six years had passed, and the boss never thought the boy expect his lie unchanged, unblemished in the uniform, sleep for every.

My son groans the boss. But no teams came yet. In the past, in the first month and even years after the boys death, he had only to say those words to be overcome by such grief that nothing short of a violent fit of weeping could relieve him.

So again he is trying to orchestrate hysteria, he is trying to design hysteria, he is trying to produce hysteria of some kind of a cathartic effect. But also this is what I mean when I say that there is a degree of arrogance, there is a degree of masculine arrogance and hubris about this whole thing, but has all the situation because what he is essentially trying to do, is trying to control hysteria and trying to weep at will.

And his ability to weep at will becomes the manly performance over here, so you know he cries, 'My Son' groans the boss. By not he has come yet, and now we know, for the first few years he had wanted to say those words and tears would come down and you know he would be flooded with tears. He could control, he could historicize himself at will. But now this point of time he would be unable to do it.

Time, he had declared then, he had told everybody, could make no difference. Other men perhaps might recover, might live their loss down, but not he. This is a very clear and direct statement about masculine arrogance of the boss, and this becomes very much the part of the masculinity package, other men might live the lost time, other men might recover, but not he.

His loss is unique, because he is the boss, and even his loss has a grand, sort of larger than life quality to it, which is incomparable with other men's losses. I mean his son is only some, his son has a unique quality to him because he happens to be boss's son.

So loss of his son is immeasurable, and no more the time he declares, or he used to declare on some point of time, no amount of time can make him forget or the original trauma, the whole experience of loss, so he had told that time could make no difference. Other man might perhaps recover, might live the lost time but not he.

How is it possible that his boy was the only son. So again this idea of only becomes important here, because what the boss seems to suggest to this kind of mentality is that his loss is unique, his son was unique, because he is part of the, the entire thing is part of the boss. So the boss like quality is obviously part of the authoritative quality, uniquely authoritative, uniquely argentic, uniquely masculine in quality.

And everything else don't compare to this at all, in terms of loss. So even the loss has a originality, has a performed quality, has a unique quality which is connected as I mentioned already with the unique masculinity of the boss. So other men might live the lost time but not he, so his boy was the only son, and ever since his birth the boss had worked in building up this business for him.

It had no other meaning if it was not for the boy. Life itself come to have no other meaning, so how on earth could he have slaved, denied himself, kept going all those years without the promise, forever before him of the boys stepping into his shoe and carrying on where he left off.

So you know this is the part of the inheritance narrative that the story begins to dramatize over here, because what is essentially being sent to us is that the boy was being prepared to step into boss's shoe, in other words, the boy was prepared to become the next boss.

So therein lies the anonymous almost allegorical quality of the boss's identity. He is obviously the boss so the boy who is stepping into shoe will become the next boss who would hopefully produce another son who would step into his next shoe, and that would continue at infinitum.

So the boss would never die in that sense, and therein lies the idea of not naming him, not making him some sort of unique character. So he becomes in a sense an allegory of authority, an allegory of privilege, an allegory of hubris, or arrogance in that sense so how on earth could he have slaved, denied himself, kept going all those years without a promise, forever before him of the boys stepping into his shoe, and carrying on where he left of.

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had passed away, the boss never thought of the boy except as lying unchanged, unblemished in his uniform, asleep for ever. "My son!" groaned the boss. But no tears came yet. In the past, in the first months and even years after the boy's death, he had only to say those words to be overcome by such grief that nothing short of a violent fit of weeping could relieve him. Time, he had declared then, he had told everybody, could make no difference. Other men perhaps might recover, might live their loss down, but not he. How was it possible! His boy was an only son. Ever since his birth the boss had worked at building up this business for him; it had no other meaning if it was not for the boy. Life itself had come to have no other meaning. How on earth could he have slaved, denied himself, kept going all those years without the promise for ever before him of the boy's stepping into his shoes and carrying on where he left off?

And that promise had been so near being fulfilled. The boy had been in the office learning the ropes for a year before the war. Every morning they had started off together; they had come back by the same train. And what congratulations he had received as the boy's father! No wonder; he had taken to it marvellously. As to his popularity with the staff, every man jack of them down to old Macey couldn't make enough of the boy. And he wasn't in the least spoiled. No, he was just his bright natural self, with the right word for everybody, with that boyish look and his habit of saying, 'Simply splendid!'

But all that was over and done with as though it never had been. The day had come when Macey had handed him the telegram that brought the whole place crashing about his head. 'Deeply regret to inform you ...' And he had left the office a broken man, with his life in



So you know it was part of a, it was meant to be part of a continuous narrative of privilege, and acquisition of success etc. alright and that promise had been so near being fulfilled. The boy had been in the office learning the roped for a year before the war. Every morning they had started off together, they had come back by the same train.

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Right so you know, we have some kind of buy to the information about the boy and so he was very much on the cusp of manhood, on cusp of becoming the authoritative, agentic man, but he



still had a boyish charm and everyone seemed to love him etc. so he was very much on the right track in terms of inheriting the legacy of the boss. The success of the boss etc.

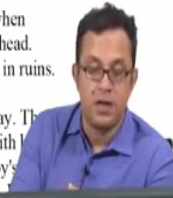
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Time, he had declared men, he had told everybody, could make no difference. Other men perhaps might recover, might live their loss down, but not he. How was it possible! His boy was an only son. Ever since his birth the boss had worked at building up this business for him; it had no other meaning if it was not for the boy. Life itself had come to have no other meaning. How on earth could he have slaved, denied himself, kept going all those years without the promise for ever before him of the boy's stepping into his shoes and carrying on where he left off?

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But all that was over and done with as though it never had been. The day had come when Macey had handed him the telegram that brought the whole place crashing about his head. 'Deeply regret to inform you ...' And he had left the office a broken man, with his life in ruins.

Six years ago, six years... How quickly time passed! It might have happened yesterday. The boss took his hands from his face; he was puzzled. Something seemed to be wrong with him. He wasn't feeling as he wanted to feel. He decided to get up and have a look at the boy's photograph. But it wasn't a favourite photograph of his; the expression was unnatural.



And then of course the whole thing ended with the war, with the violence of the war in which he died. But all that was over and done with as though it never had been. The day had come when Macey had handed him with the telegram that brought the whole place crashing about his head. "Deeply regret to inform you..." And he had left the office a broken man, with his life in ruins.

The case of this is obviously part of the mass telegrams sent out and ditched out, and discriminated, and posted to all the people who lost their sons in the war. So that telegram came to him as well, with a very standardized template of condolence which said deeply regret to inform him.

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And that promise had been so near being fulfilled. The boy had been in the office learning the ropes for a year before the war. Every morning they had started off together; they had come back by the same train. And what congratulations he had received as the boy's father! No wonder; he had taken to it marvellously. As to his popularity with the staff, every man jacked of them down to old Macey couldn't make enough of the boy. And he wasn't in the least spoilt. No, he was just his bright natural self, with the right word for everybody, with that boyish look and his habit of saying, 'Simply splendid!'

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At that moment the boss noticed that a fly had fallen into his broad inkpot, and was trying feebly but desperately to clamber out again. Help! Help! said those struggling legs. But the sides of the inkpot were wet and slippery; it fell back again and began to swim. The boss took up a pen, picked the fly out of the ink, and shook it on to a piece of blotting-paper. For a fraction of a second it lay still on the dark patch that oozed round it. Then the front legs



And of course next information was probably the loss of his son. The feather he had died in the war. And he had left the office as a broken man with his life in ruins. Six years ago, six years, how quickly the time pass, it might have happen yesterday. The boss took his hands from his face, he was puzzled, something seemed to be wrong with him, he wasn't feeling as he wanted to feel.

He decided to get up and have a look at the boy's photograph but it wasn't a favorite photograph of his, the expression was unnatural, it was cold, even stern-looking. The boy had never looked like that.

So at this point of the story we have beginning of the end of the bosses agentic, narrative or the narrative of authority. Because he is trying to weep, he is trying to weep at will, he is trying to have the, the cathartic effect, or the catharsis of weeping, which is not coming to him, which is denied to him. So no matter how hard he is trying he is not being able to weep.

So he tries to get up, look around, and then takes a look at the boy's photograph, and then decides that it is not the favorite photograph of his, so he decided to, because he finds his expression unnatural and it is not quite the way he remembers his son as. And he so tells very clearly that the boy had never looked like that.

At that moment the boss noticed that a fly had fallen into the broad inkpot, his broad inkpot and was trying feebly but desperately to clamber out again. Now this is a famous fly episode in the story which is the central episode, the central drama of the story. Which obviously is quite symbolical, and analogical in quality.

But even if you look at it superficially we have the image of the fly falling at in ink pot, and what happens is boss helps the fly come out of the inkpot, puts the fly on the blotted paper, and then keeps dropping drops of ink on the fly, just to see if it survives or it doesn't survives. And obviously in the end the fly dies.

So the whole idea, the whole image, the whole activity becomes fearsome in quality. Right because you know obviously it (( ))(17:46.5) who is doomed to push a stone up on the hill and the stone will come down again the moment it reaches top of the hill, and is again doom to push it up again forever, at infinitum.

So the whole idea (( ))(17:58.8) it becomes a very potent metaphor of purposelessness of utility, of superfluity, etc. so you know he notices that the fly has fallen into a broad ink pot and was trying feebly but desperately to clamber out again, so the fly is going to clamber out and succeed.

Help! Help! said those struggling legs, but the size of the ink pot were wet and slippery it fell back again and began to swim. The boss took up a pen picked the fly out of the ink and shook it on the piece of blotted paper. For a fraction of a second it lay still on the dark patch that hues around it. Then the front leg waved to hold and pulling a small sodden body up, it began the immense task of cleaning the ink from his wings.

Over and under, over and under went the leg along wing as a stone goes over and under the scythe. So again the scythe becomes a very architect able metaphor of death. So if you look at for instance medieval morality of place, which would produced in England you know in early fourteenth century, in fifteenth century, we find that the man of the scythe was characteristically, typically personification of death.

So we have this death persona, this death instrument, instrument of death, the object of death being underlined over here, appear over here. So the boss, first the boss takes the fly out of the ink pot, puts it on the blood and paper etc, and then uh you know he helps it recover little bit and

then for a fraction of a second it lays still and then you know the front legs began to move, and it begins to dry it self over and under, over and under went the leg along the wing as the stone goes over and under the scythe.

So the scythe metaphor is interesting over here, then there was a pause, where the fly seeming to stand on the tips of the steers try to expand to its one wing and the other. He seceded at last and settled down and it began like a minute count to clean its face.

Now what's interesting is if you look at from a visual perspective, the fly seemed to be magnified you know in the bosses imagination. In the bosses eyes, and that magnification appears to be part of the narrative as well. Because we are talking about the face of the fly, we are talking about the legs of the fly, you know in obviously normal visual vocabulary we would not use the words face or legs when we talk about a fly, the fly appears as a almost atomic creature, you know we just see a fly as a one little atom of existence.

But you know the whole thing is magnified, and not just magnified it is also decelerated, so everything is closed down, the boss is intensely focusing on the fly so that focus brings about a (( ))(20:42.0) defamilization, so the space and the time change around you know the fly, expecially it becomes expanded, becomes magnified, we talk about the face, we talk about the legs, we talk about the body of the fly, which obviously would not appear at all in normal vocabulary.

And then also in terms of time the whole idea, the whole episodes slows down the activity in terms of looking after fly, so it succeeded at last considered down like a minute cat cleaning down its face. So one could imagine that there are neutral front legs rubbed against each other likely joyfully, the whole (( ))(21:16.6) is over, it had escaped, it was ready for life again. So you know the fly seems to have escaped, thanks to the boss who took the fly out of the ink pot, and put it into plotted paper, the fly, began or initiated the drain process, and the drain process ended and it seemed to be ready for life again.

But just then the boss had an idea, he plunged his spin back into the ink, leaned his thick wrist into the blotted paper and as the fly tried his wing, down came a great, heavy blot. So this is the very complex, (( ))(21:50.1) episode which this perticular section begins to dramatize. Because

the boss is obviously being the sadist, in terms of torturing the fly, in terms of you know trying out the strength of the fly, and you know dropping blots of ink on it successively.

But also as you find you, as you read the episode in more details in fine print, the boss also wants the fly to win, to emerge as victorious. Because you know the fly struggled to emerge out of that trauma, to emerge out of that you know loss of the catastrophe, almost takes an allegorical quality. Because boss sees himself in the fly, the boss sort of projects his own struggle, projects his own survival onto the fly's action over here.

So a part of the boss wants to fly to wing as well, so when he's dropping the blots of ink on the fly, a part of him is getting tortured as well. And there in lies the importance of human metaphor, human anatomic metaphors, face, legs, body, etc, which the fly becomes essentially humanized in quality through amplification. Alright the amplification, humanization goes hand in hand, in this particular section.

So uh down came a great heavy blot, what would you make of that, what indeed, the little beggar seemed absolutely cowed, stunned, and afraid to move because of what would happen next. So again the word beggar is important, the little beggar, but then painfully it dragged itself forward. The front legs waved, caught hold, and more slowly this time the test began from the beginning.

Alright so the fly again, and this is the (( ))(23:24.9) quality that I talked about. Uh so he pushes stone up at the top of the hill and the stone drops down again, or rolls down again immediately, and he had to distinctively push it back at the top, knowing fully well, with the knowledge that this stone will drop down or roll down again. So that becomes an activity, an exercise in futility. So obviously the fly, dried it self very painfully, but just when it was about to fly off, or take off with its wings, the boss had an idea, a sort of a (( ))(23:53.9), a cruel idea, of dropping a blot of ink on the fly.

So the task began from the beginning, he is a plucky little devil thought the boss and felt real admiration for the fly's courage. So again if you look at the metaphors, plucky little devil, this is a very traditionally, manly metaphors, used in sports for instance, used in military, for instance, you know it is almost like you have got admiration for someone's strength, fortitude, bravery, so plucky is a very very typically manly word, used among men and similar situations in sports.

And I felt a real admiration for the fly's courage, so you know he is admiring the fly's courage so much like a manly admiration of another man's courage. But that was the way to tackle things, that was the right spirit. Never say die, it was only a question of. But the fly had again finished at its limborious task. And boss had just time to refill its pen to shake fair and square on the new clean body, yet another dark drop.

So the fly began the task of drying her self and then it managed to dry itself after a very intense labor, very slow down period of time where it went on and on, the legs went on and on and then in the end, it somehow managed to dry itself, the boss had just time to refill its pain, shake fair and square on new clean body, yet another dark drop.

So the boss is obviously torturing the fly by deciding to drop yet another bloat of ink on the fly. What about it this time, a painful moment of suspense followed, but behold the front legs were again waiving, the boss felt a rush of relief. So again this is what I mean when I say that there is a degree of empathy also, that the boss happens to have with the fly. Because a part of him, is admiring the fly's courage, a part of him is admiring the fly's never give up, never say die attitude.

Because that becomes symptom of projection of his own attitude towards life, you know that the very traditionally "manly" attitude of never giving up, or never say die, which the fly seems to enact in this particular struggle. So this is what I mean when I say this whole episode becomes ((25:58.8) in quality. It is not just sadist, of course it is sadist the boss has been cruel and is dropping blots of ink on the fly, but also it is equally masiquistic, a part of the boss also wants to emerge out as well, so then lies the dualism at play.

Okay, so he felt, the boss felt rush of relief, he leaned over the fly insert to it tenderly you awful little, uh so you know may be the word is bastard of whatever we don't quite know, but again it is one of those typical manly word which they use. Almost grudge in admiration, when you grudgingly admire someone and these are kind of words which we use.

Pluck a little devil for instance, devil is traditionally negative, cortication of plucky little devil becomes, positive to a negative. And actually have a brilliant notion of breathing on it to help him try and process.

So this is really complex, existential situation at work, because on one hand the boss is dropping ink on the fly, and on the other hand the boss is trying or wanting the fly to win, to come of out it victorious, to emerge out of it laborious, or triumphant sorry. So he is actually breathing on the fly to help in trying out the process, so he is dropping the ink on the first place, as well as breathing on the fly to help him try and process.

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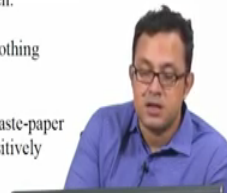
afraid to move because of what would happen next. But then, as if painfully, it dragged itself forward. The front legs waved, caught hold, and, more slowly this time, the task began from the beginning.

He's a plucky little devil, thought the boss, and he felt a real admiration for the fly's courage. That was the way to tackle things; that was the right spirit. Never say die; it was only a question of... But the fly had again finished its laborious task, and the boss had just time to refill his pen, to shake fair and square on the new-cleaned body yet another dark drop. What about it this time? A painful moment of suspense followed. But behold, the front legs were again waving; the boss felt a rush of relief. He leaned over the fly and said to it tenderly, "You artful little b..." And he actually had the brilliant notion of breathing on it to help the drying process. All the same, there was something timid and weak about its efforts now, and the boss decided that this time should be the last, as he dipped the pen deep into the inkpot.

It was. The last blot fell on the soaked blotting-paper, and the draggled fly lay in it and did not stir. The back legs were stuck to the body; the front legs were not to be seen.

'Come on,' said the boss. 'Look sharp!' And he stirred it with his pen in vain. Nothing happened or was likely to happen. The fly was dead.

The boss lifted the corpse on the end of the paper-knife and flung it into the waste-paper basket. But such a grinding feeling of wretchedness seized him that he felt positively frightened. He started forward and pressed the bell for Macey.



So it is very complex, agented activity at play. Uh all the same there was something timid and weak about the efforts now. About its efforts now. So we can see that the fly is dying, it is losing out its vigor, and the boss decided that this time should be the last, as it dipped the pen deep into the inkpot.

So he dipped the pen again into the ink pot just to take up as much as ink as possible and to really toll, or hurl, a really heavy inks drop. But at the same time it also decided, by this point of time that it would be the last drop, that this would be final drop. This should be the last, it was.

Not just look at the finality of the sentence, the sense of finality, the sense of dramatic finality of the sentence, just two words It was, and that had almost an (( ))(28:08.01) that almost has a clinically complete quality about it, it is about clinical closure.

It was the last blot fell on the soaked blotted paper, and the draggle fly lay in it under not stirred. The back legs were stuck to the body, the front legs were not to be seen. So obviously it becomes the mangled corpse, and again the legs body, front legs, back legs, these becomes, the fly really becomes magnified visually in the bosses eyes. And that because it is focalized for the boss, we as readers also see the fly as magnificently, uh magnified animal.

Uh you know obviously through a decelerated time as well. Come on said the boss, look sharp. And stirred it with the pain in vain. Nothing happened, or was likely to happen the fly was dead. So the boss obviously is not desperately trying to stir the fly, give it some kind of the nourishment through words, to gestures etc.

So he trying to stir the pen, the fly with its pen but it is in vain, nothing happened, or was likely to happen the fly was dead. So in a way this becomes interestingly, like I said there is a sense of clinical closure about it. Everything comes to an end with this fly dead. The boss lifted the corpse on the end with the paper knife and flung it into the waste paper basket.

So again the word corpse is important because the word corpse is normally used for human dead bodies, right to that is what I mean when I say that fly is humanized over here. But not in nice way, the fly is humanized over here in order to dramatize the extent of violence on the fly's body. And one can ofcourse read the whole thing, the whole episode as a allegory of violence down to young men during the way.

The young men were sent to the war to fight and become fodder for the entire lust of power, for the entire lust for territory etc. uh so the fly becomes, among the many things the fly becomes also a metaphor of young men, the youth who lost their lives in the war and are completely purposeless and irrational as well.

So the superfluity, the ((( ))(30:10.2) quality of the fly is also connected or connectable to the (( ))(30:14.3) quality of the war. So therein lies the interesting equation. The boss lifted the corpse



with the end of the paper knife and flung it on to the waste paper basket. But such a grinding feeling of wretchedness seized him, that he felt positively frightened.

He started forward and pressed the bell for Macey. So you know this is interesting, because if you look at the, seemingly oxymoronic quality he felt positively frightened. So you know he is engulfed by fear, he is posed by fear. He felt positively frightened, so frightening of fear almost becomes a positive quality in his intensity.

It just completely consumed him, he is completely moved by fear. The feeling of wretchedness moved him, seized him, took possession of him, owned him and he felt positively frightened. So you know he is completely filled with fear. Owned by fear, there is a territorial quality about fear at play that takes over his body, it takes over his entire, encognitive system, his self.

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It was. The last blot fell on the soaked blotting-paper, and the dragged fly lay in it and did not stir. The back legs were stuck to the body; the front legs were not to be seen.

'Come on,' said the boss. 'Look sharp!' And he stirred it with his pen in vain. Nothing happened or was likely to happen. The fly was dead.

The boss lifted the corpse on the end of the paper-knife and flung it into the waste-paper basket. But such a grinding feeling of wretchedness seized him that he felt positively frightened. He started forward and pressed the bell for Macey.

'Bring me some fresh blotting-paper,' he said sternly, 'and look sharp about it.' And while the old dog padded away he fell to wondering what it was he had been thinking about before. What was it? It was... He took out his handkerchief and passed it inside his collar. For the life of him he could not remember.



He started forward and pressed the bell for Macey, now calling his messenger, secretary in desperation. Bring me some fresh blotting paper, he said sternly and looked sharp about it. And while the old dog padded away he fell to wondering what it was he had been thinking about before. What was it? It was... He took out his handkerchief and passed it inside his collar. For the life of him he could not remember.

Now that is the end of the story but what happens is really, really complex, from a cognitive level, from psychological level, from an existential level and of course from gendered level as well. And level of gender performance. So he is desperately trying to reassert his authority, after having lost with the fly, because he wanted the fly to win, he wanted to see the fly emerge as victorious.

But of course as you know happens, as a result of which he feels possibly frightened, he feels so exhausted and completely annivaten of all kinds of vigor. So in a very desperate attempt to regain you know his authority, he calls, he presses the bell for Macey calls him and says bring me some fresh blotting paper.

So you know this idea of bring me some fresh blotting paper becomes some kind of desperate attempt to articulate authority, and then of course he follows it up by saying, and look sharp about it. So do it quickly, hurry up.

When the old dog padded away, again look at the interesting way in which the the humans, actually humans in the story, dehumanize, and describe as a dog for instance, Macey, where as we have just seen how the fly, which is an insect was humanized in terms of being amplified visually.

And when the old dog padded away he felt wondering what was it that he had been thinking about before? So he sort of remember what was it that he was trying for before. What was it? He took out handkerchief and passed it inside his collar. So he is obviously sweating, perhaps with nervousness, perhaps with exhaustion, for the life of him he could not remember.

Now obviously this is, he had forgotten and this whole story ends with a forgetfulness or forgetting. Now remember this is exactly what the Woodfield's condition was at the beginning of the story. He came to tell something to the boss and he couldn't remember, his hands were shaking and his beard was going red, but for the life of it he cannot remember what was he trying to tell the boss, and at that point boss was in complete cognitive control, and so he very patronizingly gave whisky to Woodfield to help him recover.

But when the story ends we find out that the boss was pretty much on the same plane as Woodfield was, in terms of not able to articulate, in terms of not able to have any cognitive control over his senses, so what that fly episode does is that it essentially annihilates, or liquidate the agency in the process, the agency is liquidated completely, so he becomes emptied out man.

Uh and in a sense he can't remember anything, and obviously as you know by now, he doesn't have a future to look forward to, because his son is dead. So he becomes very perversely stuck to the present. Without any pass he can't remember it, and of course in the future. So essentially he becomes in a very perverse sense a timeless man, in a very negative sense a timeless man, so he is shivering, he is full of fever, and he pulls out his handkerchief and rubs of sweat from his color but for the life of him he can't remember.

So for life of him, for all his attempt, for all his desperate attempt to regain his agency and condition back he cannot remember what it was he was thinking about before. So the whole idea of masculinity, the whole idea of having this agentic, authoritative masculinity is decimated in the end.

So the story becomes a very scaring, a very strong, feminist attack, feminist critique of a certain kind of masculinity, uh a masculinity which is authoritative, which is certain of his certainties, which is full of convictions, which is nonporous in quality. So that masculinity is first presented to us in all glory. Surrounded by new furniture, new gadgets, social success, etc, but as the story progresses we find that that masculinity model is more and more decimated by the narratorial voice in the story.

And then of course by the time the story ends that kind of gendered identity, gendered agency goes completely out of window. Uh for the boss cannot even remember what he was thinking before, forget about having any kind of agency.

Right so the whole idea of agency and gendered identity, is inverted over here. We have a very interesting problematization of gendered identity. Because we saw earlier how it was the women who are travelling to Belgium, it was the women who are traveling, who allowing the men to leave home and sort of restricting them in terms of deciding, whether or not they should leave at

certain times of the day, or certain times of the week. So the women seem to have, or at least appear to have more agency in terms of controlling (( ))(36:00.3).

Whereas the men who turns out to be memory less men, weak men, mourning men, who do not quite have the agency to be authoritative anymore. So if you finish the story and then go back in the beginning of the story you find the entire authorities of the boss is a very superficial architecture, which is quite fragile in quality. Which can be decimated at any given point of time. With any kind of internet, it doesn't have to be external invasion.

It will decay internally, there is a big degree of internal decadence involved in the masculinity which is obviously some part of the strategy to feel important, to feel privilege etc. and just to wind up what we have seen already is that how the boss had equated prestige with trauma. So his trauma, his loss of some had a prestige quotient to it which he thought was unique to other people's losses.

So his son wasn't the only son, so had told himself, he had congratulated himself in the family so that he can weep at will in terms of thinking about his son, his dead son at any given point of time. But of course we see in the end of this part of the story that he cannot weep anymore, because like every other person as (( ))(37:09.8) had dried. So this drying down of grief becomes symbol of you know loss of agency, because as I mentioned there is a very interesting equation with agency and grief over here.

And of course the fly episode becomes a desperate attempt to set a massacres to drama the part of the boss, to see if he can play out his own attempts on the fly, map it on to the fly, and of course the fly dies in the end, so the boss becomes both the torturer and the tortured in this particular episode and hence this entire set of massacres bit, and so the fly is dead and the bosses non ability to remember, completely decimate the mortal masculinity that had presented earlier in the story.

So this concludes our reading of fly, and we can obviously connect this very interestingly with the Bell Hook's essay on Patriarchy. Because the boss is very much those patriarchal men who are completely confident, completely closed in their convictions etc. but what the story does from a very very powerful feminist perspective, it completely cracks open that privilege of

patriarchy, it completely cracks open that model of masculinity, and it shows it as fragile, as vulnerable and completely weak at this point of time.

So go to the story please one more time, and hopefully we have covered most of the important issues which are relevant for this particular course, so with that we conclude Katherine Mansfield's short story *The Fly* and move on to the next text in the next lecture. Thank you for your attention.