

Contemporary Literature
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Arthur Miller Clara

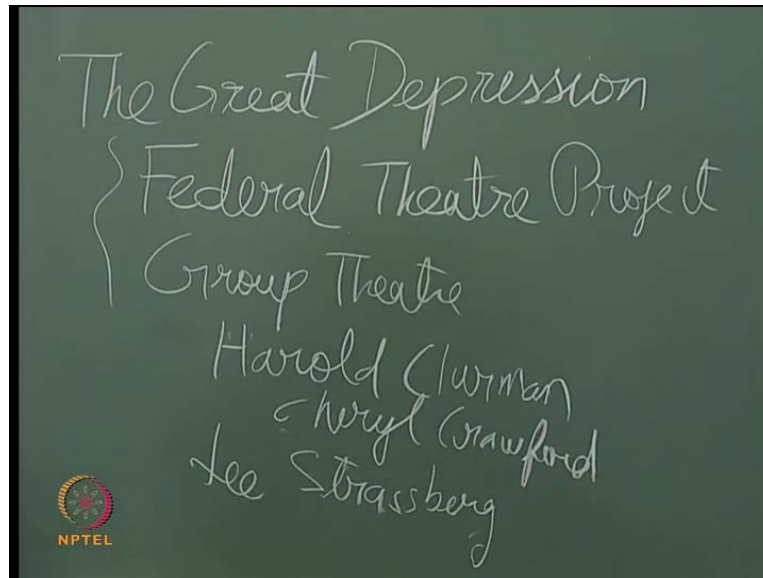
Good Morning. We are going to begin with Clara, a play, one of the later plays by Arthur Miller, the great American play write. Arthur Miller 1915 to 2005; he is considered as one of the greatest American play writes and he forms a trinity of the best American play writes along with Eugene O'Neill Tennessee Williams and of course, Miller . So, together, they are considered that best American play writes of the 20th century was **was** born in New York in the Brookline part of New York and from a very well-known and well established Jewish family. His father was a manufacturer of hats and therefore, the family gets this surname Miller.

Miller had an elder brother Curmmit and his sister who was younger to him, later went on to become the famous stage actress, theatre actress Joan Copeland. One of the most formative influences on Miller's dramaturgy is The Great Depression. The Great Depression is an event of the late 1920s and which **which** coincided with the fall of the Wall Street. And it so happened that several families were ruined because of the, you know, sudden financial beak down and Miller's family was extremely affected by this **by** **this** event. The family has to soon move to a small frame house in Brookline and Miller also felt that there was a perceptible shift in attitude of his other family members towards him because of the loss of fortunes. And this was one event which went on to influence all of Miller's works and we will find that how many of his other plays are influencing indeed by this, by the loss of fortune and what something like loss of wealth can do to a family.

Miller studied journalism. He entered the University of Michigan in 1934 and won the students award for playwriting. And from the beginning, his interest in family relationships was evident as he wrote several plays; even his apprenticeship plays are

about tracing the relationship between family members; especially between fathers and sons and brothers and brothers.

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After graduating in English in 1938, Miller returned to New York where he joined the famous Federal Theater Project. This is another term that all of us should be familiar with - Federal Theater Project and Miller wrote several plays during this time for the radio. Radio was the very important medium those days and Miller wrote a couple of successful radio plays.

Group Theater - another important organization was the part of a Federal Theater Project and group theater was established by names like Harold Clurman, Cheryl Crawford and of course, Lee Strasberg. So, these were the famous names associated with the group theatre. And the group theatre for the organization which was established to promote young talent, of course, but of course, the works of those play writers who wrote theater and plays about social changes, about social issues and **this was the and** this was the theme that the group was extremely interested. So, members of the groups tended to hold left wing political views and they wanted to produce plays which dealt with important social issues. So, while working in the group theater, Lee Strasberg developed the famous Method Acting; his theory of Method Acting which derives from the ideas of the Russian coinstantaneous Tennessee Lavonsky.

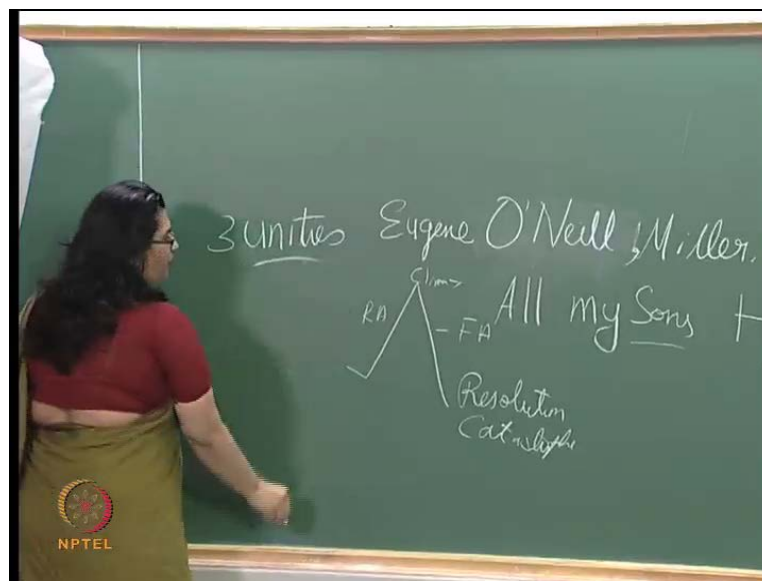
So, the idea was that the actor should be so immersed in his role that he or she almost becomes one with the role. So, trying to form the utmost sympathy or empathy for the character and this, Strasberg felt, could be achieved through unlimited number of rehearsals which would lead to perfection. So, this was the Lee Strasberg theory of acting. Now, the group disbanded in 1941. They did enormous **in the** service to the world of theater in America. However, in 1941, during the years of the Second World War, the group disbanded. And it so happened that after the second world war, most of the members of the group. Because that tended to hold left wing political views, they were investigated by the House On American Activities Committee.

So, some members like Elias Kazan, we are going to talk about Elias Kazan more because **he was** he worked in collaboration with Arthur Miller on a number of plays and Miller and Kazan were extremely close at one point. So, Elias Kazan and Clifford (()), another very important play write of those times, along with Lee Jacob who was also a very important theater actor; so, they testified before the House On American Activities Committee and named other members of the group who also had left wing ridiculed views. So, these peoples were granted some kind of clemency by the committee, but those who refused to name names **names** of those other people, the friends of the colleagues who were also a part of the group theater, or who also held left wing and political views, they were blacklisted by the committee. So, that was the tone, model tone of those times.

Coming back to Miller, Miller joined a group theater in 1940. Miller also married Mary Slattery and he had two children with her and Miller's first play appeared on broad way in 1944. It was called The Man Who Had All The Luck. This was followed by a novel and anti-Semitic novel called Focus and which was followed by his first successful play on broad way. I am sure you know the name of the play, but any way, All My Sons. All My Sons is about, again it goes back to Miller's cherish theme for exploring the relationships between fathers and sons and brothers and brothers, and it is about a family a mid-western family where the father deals in manufacturing of air parts. But in order to make some quick profits, he sells defective aircraft parts to the army and what happens is there is crash which results in the death of several young pilots during the war and it ends with the son accusing his father of killing those pilots.

And at the end, the father shoots himself; he commits suicide and his last words are **yeah** that of course, they were all my sons, which **mean this you know** creates some sort of bond between, not just between members of one's own family, but also between family as a unit and also society as a part of **you know** a larger family. Structurally, it follows the conventional Aristotelian construction of plot. You all know what is Aristotelian construction.

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You have a beginning, middle and an end. Also you have another beginning; you have the rising action; you have the climax; the falling action and the resolution catastrophe. The structure, when you are doing Oedipus, we have already seen how the Greeks followed this structure where Lesley and Miller also tried to follow the same module in his **very first** the second play; the first successful play.

So, it is also a play which observes the three unities. So, you find unity of time, place and action. The entire action of the play centers on one single plot, one single theme; there are no major digressions; the play takes place in one particular home. The home and also it takes place within a period of 24 hours. So, strictly conforms to the three unities. So, structurally as you are saying the play is quite close to the Greek tragedies.

The play was directed by Elias Kazan; Elias Kazan who later became an informer for the HUAC, but during the time of all my sons and some of Miller's early plays Elias Kazan and Arthur Miller were extremely close; they were great friends, both were Jews and

there was a kind of bond between them. However, as we were just talking, Elias Kazan went on to name names before the House American Activities Committee. He was also an extremely successful Hollywood director and producer. He has written a timeless of his life called *A Life*, but after once he testified, there **were they** was a major rift between Elias Kazan and Miller.

We will talk about that, but then the Miller's next successful play after *All My Sons* was *Death Of a Salesman* and *Death Of a Salesman* is again regarded as one of the most influential American plays. It is usually clubbed along with Tennessee Williams such street car name desired in terms of the risks; in terms of the theatrical innovations; in terms of technique and it is still remembered for those factors. The play brought Miller international fame and became one of the major achievements of the modern American theater. It also won **(O)** the prize for the best American play of that year. It narrates the story and this is another timeless character from Miller - Willy Loman, a traveling sales man who is close to his death, who is a near approaching his death.

The title itself contains death in it. So, it should tell us about what the play is all about and again, his trouble relationship with his two sons Biff and Happy; especially Biff. Why? Because Miller dealt a lot into flash back techniques and also expressionistic techniques **which was** which he had borrowed from the Germans which basically American play writes have borrowed from the Germans. So, talking about expressionism in *Death Of a Salesman*, expressionism as a technique, as a movement it started; it grew in Germany and the major play writes in Germany were Ernst Toller and George Kaiser.

So, the plots and stories of expressionist films and theater, they often dealt with madness, insanity, betrayal and tragedy and they are opposite. They are opposite to the standard action adventure and romantic theater which was prevalent in those times. Expressionism as a technique is a practice in which subconscious thoughts or the subjective or inner realities of life are presented by a wide range of non-naturalistic techniques. The non-naturalistic techniques include distortion, exaggeration, primitivism, fantasy and symbolism.

Expressionism has started as a way to react against modernization and a rapid urbanization of those times. It was believed that man cannot cope with the rapid changes that are happening around him; especially **on the after the** after a month of the First

World War. It was a natural reaction to all those major changes, social political changes which were happening immediately after the First World War. And if you remember a perhaps you can look for this painting by Edward Munch - The Scream.

The Scream is a painting by Edward Munch which has a human figure. It looks like human figure, but it is extremely distorted and it is screaming; figure is screaming. You cannot make out whether it is a male or a female or a child, but a human figure which is surrounded by dark, non-naturalistic colors and brightly painted huge and the figure is screaming; it is horrifying, depicting the horrors of the modern age.

So, expression is a measure technique; It was first introduced on the American theater by a Eugene O'Neill in his the Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape. Tennessee Williams followed up with A Street Car Named Desire and then (O) wrote the Adding Machine; very famously created the character of mister zero - a very common middle class person who has who leaves the life of complete conformity and monotony and the dominant theme in all plays which employed the technique of a expressionism were... actually the dominant theme was horror of urban life and apocalyptic visions of the collapse of human civilization.

Miller's next important play was The Crucible, written in 1953. The crucible is a kind of parable; it is a morality tale; it is an allegory, but it is an it on the surface, it deals with the lives of those people who were persecuted by the Salem which trail during 1692. Salem was the village in the Massachusetts state of America where 150 people were tried and executed for so called practicing in witch craft which is, of course, not exactly true. And Miller wrote The Crucible as a response to the achieve AC, to the actions of achieve AC, Miller himself was questioned how that representatives of the achieve AC in 1956.

The play was first performed in broad way in 1953 and the lay the the initial reviews were pretty hostile; people dint like because they could immediately collect the goings on the stage with the goings in America. But later on it went on to become timeless classic. Crucible is still an an extremely relevant play. So, the play was later adapted for a film by John Paul Sartre who wrote the screen play. It was French film. It was called Le sorcier, the witch craft of Salem.

And very recently in 1995, to be precise, the film was again produced with Daniel delouse and Venona rider and it was also called The Crucible. The crucible was followed

by a Double bill. Double bill is when **when** an artist produces two plays simultaneously on the stage one after another. So, the major play was a view from the bridge; then it was that the second play of double **double** bill was a Memory of Two Mondays. It was also the time when **house American activities was** House American Activities committee was harassing Miller a lot.

At the same time, Miller's own marriage to Mary slattern was faltering and soon it ended and Miller married the Hollywood star Marilyn Monroe. Life with Marilyn was not very easy for Miller. She had her problems. For example, she would she was over dependent on prescription pills and Miller had hard time trying to wean away from her addiction, but the marriage could not survive. It was a very painful period for Miller. At the same time, he also wrote the screen play of a movie The Misfits, which he wrote primarily for Marilyn. It is about three cowboys and a girl; the girl is, you know, hugely inspired by the Marilyn character.

The film was shot on location in Nevada. Soon things turned off very bad for the Millers. Then the Marilyn and Miller divorced **as soon as** soon after the completion of the misfits. Millers life post Marilyn Monroe - so, he came up with a play After the Fall in 1964. I will erase it. After The Fall became quite a controversial play. Many people thought that Miller is trying to capitalize on his relationship with the Marilyn Monroe. It was considered as a sort expose of the Marilyn persona.

However, the play does have its literally marids apart from the controversial angles given to it. The title is derived, of course, from the Bible The fall, After the Fall and it takes off from where Albert **((O))** left his existentialist novel The Fall. So, that was the taking off point for Miller's After The Fall.

And another thing, that After The Fall is noted for, is that after the respect Elia kazan and Arthur Miller again came back together as Elia kazan directed After The Fall. The film sorry the play again was barged down by controversies when it was first staged, but it has staged well and during its most recent production, it was reviewed extremely positively. During the 60s and 70s, Miller came up with two important plays incident at Vichy which is about the Holocaust, the theme of Holocaust in France and the price which traces his own uneasy relationship with his brother Curmit Miller. In 70s also wrote the American Clock and when back to his age old theme of a Delineating the

Depression Years and his influence on his family. Miller has served as the president of PEN. It is literary organization; it expands for poets play writes, essayists and novelists.

So, he has served as the president of PEN. He has also been extremely politically active, socially active and he took extremely, played a very proactive part in supporting writers, those writers who lived in exile because of the oppressive resign. So, important play writes like Volo Soyinka Alexander solves and even Salman Rushdie, there was fatwa against him and Miller came out and was very vocal in expressing his support for these plays when they were in trouble; Miller's plays of the 80s and 90s. And now, we are gradually coming to Clara which **which** is the play we are going to discuss.

So, one of the most important plays of the 80s was Arch Bishop Ceiling which is based on writers in exile in communist Czechoslovakian republic. Then it was followed by **(O)** for a lady and some kind of love story in another Double-Bill in 1983. Then, he went on to write Danger: Memory.

Danger: Memory which is and it comprises two plays - I Cannot Remember Anything and Clara. Now, the interesting thing which is common between these two plays is that they both deal with the theme of memory; not about loss of memory, but what does memory mean to the people? What can forgetting something lead to? And this is what forms a crux of the two plays of the later 80s.

So, we are going to talk about Clara in detail, from next class onwards, but of course, let me finish the presentation on Miller. Later, Miller went on to write another important play called Right Down Mount Morgan which sort of, you know, traces the moral accesses during the Regan era, president Regan. Then, in 1994, he wrote his play Broken Glass, which again traces the impact of holocaust on peoples lives.

It was also the time, it was also the period when Miller wrote his extremely well received auto biography Times Bends in 1987. Miller continued writing his plays and of course, he was also a very prolific essayist and the columnist for the New York Times in 21st century. So, you see his career which began roughly about 1944 and it went on. So, till the beginning of **twenty of the** 21st century.

So, among his people who started writing along with him, you know, Eugene O'Neil of course, he was slightly senior to Miller and Tennessee Williams Clifford orders William

Hellman. Miller sort of you know survived all his contemporaries. So, that is in his longevity something that amazes most people because he never gave up. He was so interested in his work, in his craft that he continued writing till the very end of his life.

So, he died in 2005, but before that he came up with Mister Peter's Connections and it is also an extension of this theme, the memory theme, **mister peters connection** where Mister Peter is almost like a Miller persona; mouth piece of author Miller. Mister Peter is a very old man who is reminiscing on a life; a life which has, a well lived life, where he has been married several times; he has children; he has been through lot of social turmoil's, personal troubles and all. So, in a way, he is looking back reflecting on his life and trying to make **trying to make** some sense of the connections **that were** that existed between him and the people who touched his life.

Another important play of this time is Resurrection Blues. Resurrection Blues which was written in 2002. This is a satire; satire on media and contemporary materialistic values. Miller's last play was Finishing the Picture and it is very interesting that Finishing the Picture happens to be his last play which again reflects on his life with Marilyn Monroe. So, **finishing the picture** in finishing the picture Miller takes us back to that times when the misfits for which he had written the screen play and which was shot with, **filmed** filmed with **((O))** and the marilyn monroe. So, Finishing the Picture is all about how the misfits was shot on location in Nevada.

Marilyn was extremely ill. She was hallucinating. She was depressed and all those elements which Miller perhaps could never talk to the public openly about, they were brought in Finishing the Picture; perhaps it is sort of exorcizing his demons and very significantly that was his last play and Miller died at his home in Connecticut Rocksbury in 2005. He was survived by three of his children.

One of the major contributions of Arthur Miller to dramaturgy is democratization of tragedy. Now, if you remember the definition of tragedy as given by Aristotle, so, major feature of that definition is when you talk about an ideal tragedy hero, he should be an essentially a good man; man of noble birth or noble rank; a high highly placed person who has a fatal flaw. Now, this condition high birth nobility, this was constantly questioned by Miller in depiction or a representation of all his major heroes. So, whether it is Willy Loman in Death of a Salesman, whether its Joe Keller and All My Sons,

whether it is John Proctor in **in** the Crucible and Quentin in After The Fall. No way can anyone categorize them as people of high birth or people who hail from the aristocracy, but Miller's major contribution to dramatize was precisely in his celebrated essay The Tragedy and Common Man.

Miller argues that a common is as wept a subject for tragedy as kings and royalty. His argument central on the fact that there are no kings and queens anymore and what we see now, what we see today is a struggle; a day to day struggle in lives of the common middle class people. And all his characters are common people who deal with uncommon situations or even battle with everyday struggles and they are battered, but they eventually emerge as heroes.

John proctor of Lord Hero who has an affair with his servant girl begin and then he pays with his life. So, all good men, essentially good people who do lot of good deeds for others, they are not of noble birth and they have some kind of fatal flaw and they pay for it with their lives. So, that is what Miller's legacy law is all about. His plays are written in extremely accessible language; in the language of common man. Also, his plays make a hero of ordinary people. So, that is his contribution to American, to the American drama.

Major themes in Miller's plays are guilt and collective responsibility. Miller's tells us human beings are born with guilt, essential guilty and that guilt, of course, you know, that notion of guilt biblical and the idea of collective responsibility that is an existential theme which Miller remains preoccupied with, throughout his working life that all of us are, human being are responsible in some way or other; not just for their immediate families, but also for the larger society that exists outside their closely knit families.

Miller's influences are extremely evident on the works of the letter, play writes for example, Edward Albee who wrote who is afraid of Virginia wolf, American dream, the zoo story; then David Mamet whose glen berry glen ross is huge homage to Miller's death of the sales man because it also traces the lives and struggles of sales men like Lee Loman. So, the characters of Roma and the others in salesman who appear in Glen berry Glen Ross, they are extremely influenced by Miller's Death of a sales man. And then, of course, we have done John Guare and six degrees of separation **which again**.

So, these are the play writes who have questioned, who have interrogated the theme be construct of famous American Dream? What is American dream? And this question was raised first by Eugene O'Neill, of course, and also famously in Death Of a Salesman and later on, these play writes continued Miller's legacy as far as the themes are concerned. Harold Pinter on Miller says and I would read quotation by him - Miller and I had memorable trip to Turkey about twenty years ago, when we met a lot of writers that had been in prison and had been tortured. I admired him tremendously for his independence and his clarity of mind.

So, the ideas that Harold Pinter and Arthur Miller, they have travelled together to Turkey to support a group of our writers who were in prison and it was during that time that Pinter felt that Arthur Miller is not just **just** a name sake figure head of PEN, but he was extremely proactive in his support for those writers who were in trouble.

So, on his 80th birthday, Salman Rushdie said about Arthur Miller - Moralistic nature is a very rare quality in these degraded days. Very few writers possess it; Miller seem in it; when I needed help, I am proud that Arthur Miller's was one of the first and loudest voices raised on my behalf. On his death **Pen America**, the **the** organization Pen America, it instituted the Arthur Miller freedom to write lecture.

So, it was considered a very fitting tribute to a person whose entire dramatize is centered on expression of **of** the self and freedom for the people. Miller has been also be interestingly, extremely well received in India. His plays are regularly staged both in English as well as in regional Indian languages in India. So, particularly important are Death of a Salesman, All My Sons, The Prize and recently there was an adaptation in Hindi of I cannot remember anything and Clara. So, Miller's legacy lives on; Miller died in 2005, but, Miller forms, Miller is still is a major force in the theatrical tradition of contemporary times. So, we will begin with his Clara from next time onwards.

Thank you.