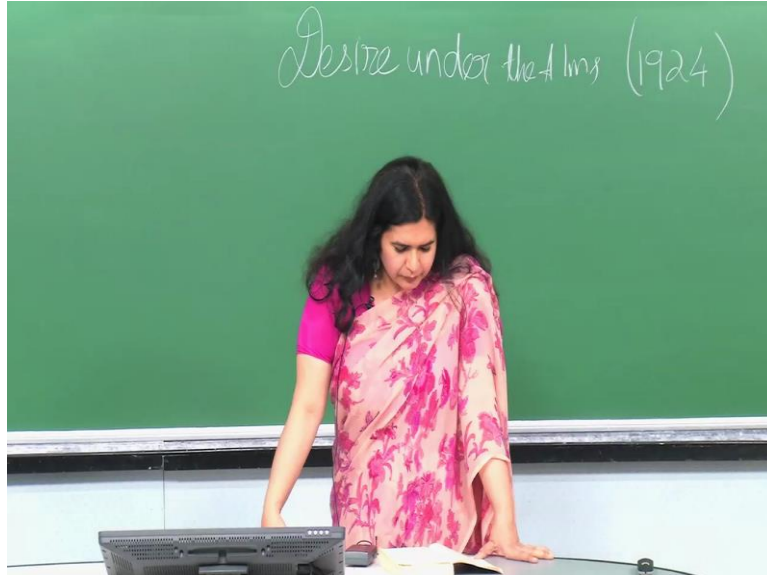


American Literature & Culture
Prof. Aysha Iqbal Vishwamohan
Department of Humanities and Social Science
Indian Institute of Technology, Madras
Mod 07 Lecture Number 39
Eugene O'Neill Desire Under the Elms (Lecture 33)

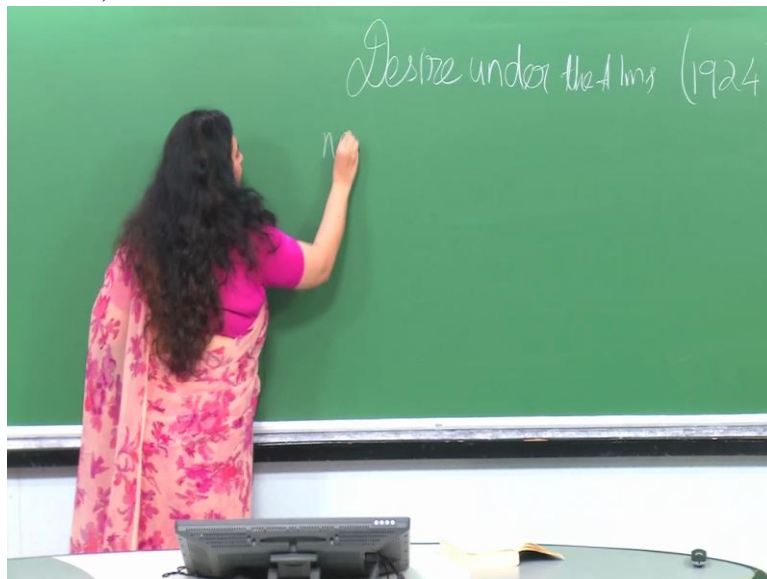
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(Professor – student conversation starts)

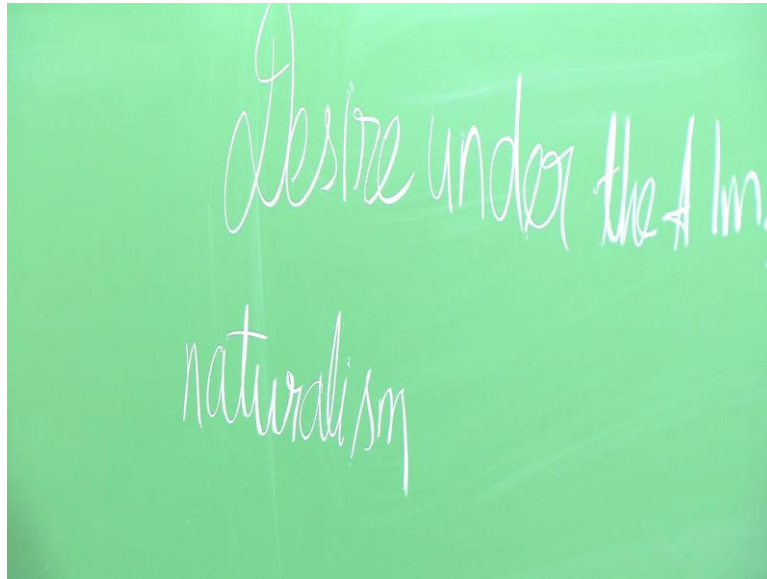
Professor: So this is our play, Desire under the Elms by Eugene O'Neill and the play was published in 1924 and it is strictly speaking, it falls under the category of naturalism.

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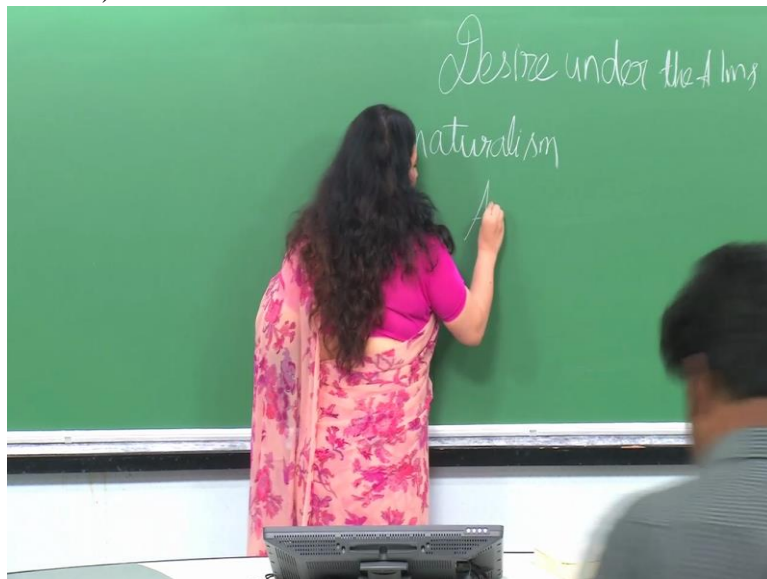
Professor: Now tell me which other work have you done recently that conforms to this theory of naturalism? Recently

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Professor: recently An American Tragedy

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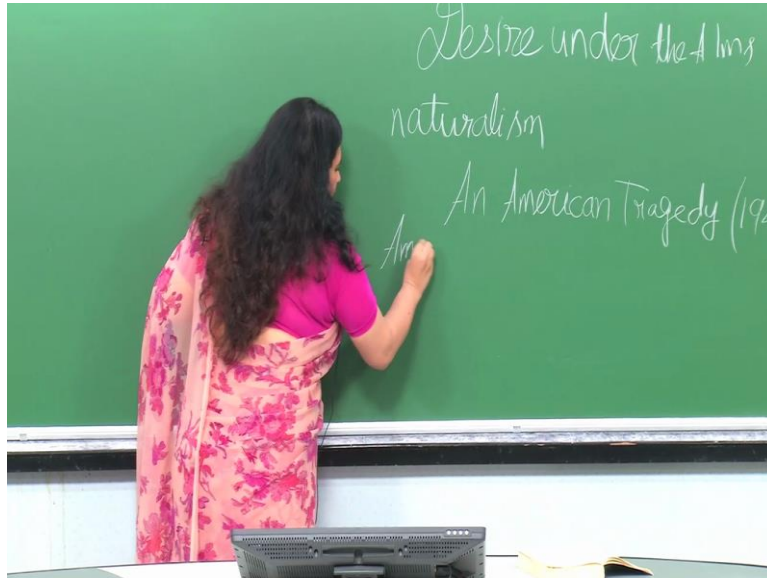
Professor: how does Miss Julie come? I had said recent work that we have done, and when was that published? It was published in 1925, OK and now both of these are natural, highly naturalistic works. And when you, I was telling you about the movie which was based on an American Tragedy, it is called a Place in the Sun. Ok Now what do the place in the sun mean? What is having a place in the sun mean? It is an idiomatic term. What does it mean? You make your own place in the sun or you gain a place in the sun.

Student: You have your own standing

Professor: You have your own standing. So that's what the movie is about and that's what the novel is all about, Ok. Now look at the similarity. A Place in the Sun, Desire under the Elms,

and then American Tragedy, naturalism, and American Tragedy is also story of, give me some of the words that I talked about; American Dream

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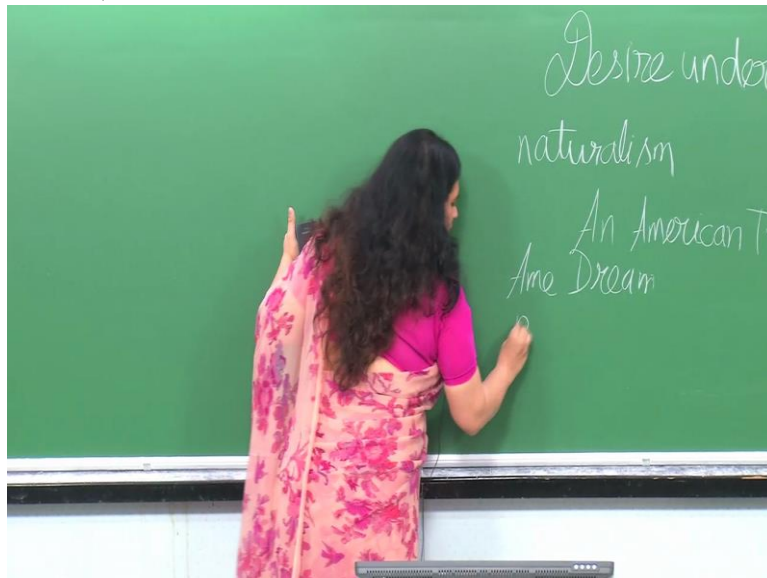


Professor: something else? What is the hero like? Driven by

Student: Passion

Professor: And?

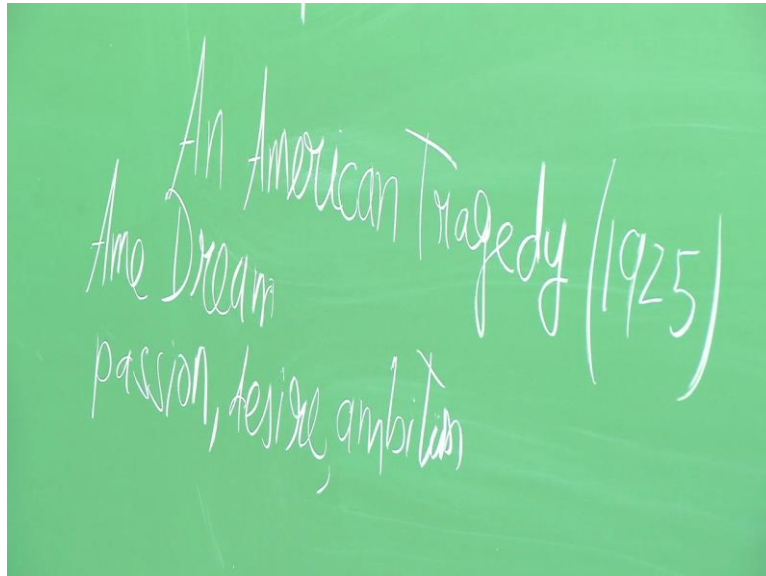
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Professor: Passion, did someone say desire and no one said ambition, Ok. Ambition is at the heart. We were talking about the themes. Passion, desire, ambition and those are defining themes of an American Tragedy and uncannily, I will, you know one is a drama, one is a novel but then you will find several features overlapping of these so it's a good exercise to

compare the two, the two texts although they belong to different genres. Ok but they subscribe to the same theory of naturalism.

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Professor: Now who can revise naturalism with me? How, what, how is nature represented in naturalism?

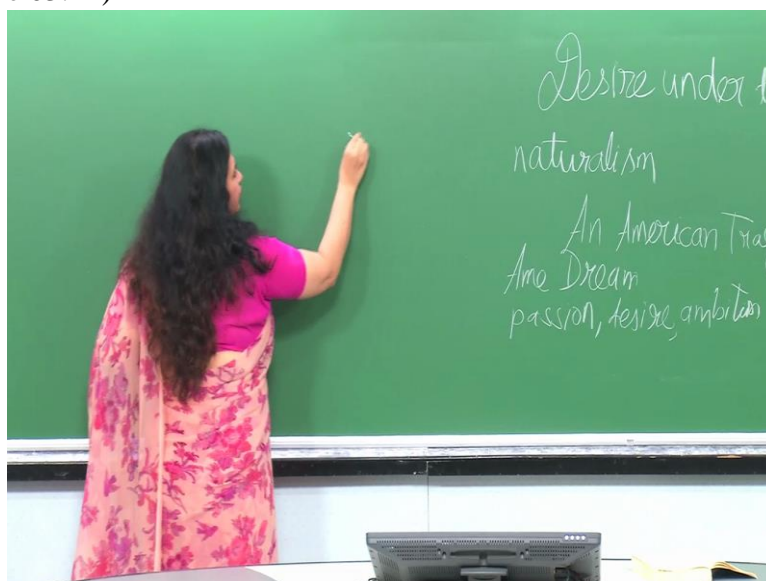
Student: In raw

Professor: Raw?

Student: Yeah, naturalism

Professor: R a w? So

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Professor: nature is raw and earthy. We were also talking about, you know when we came to a point where Clive, Clyde Griffiths, Ok Clyde Griffiths takes this girl. So he is taking her for this boat ride, there is

Student: There is a verse

Professor: Yes, how is a nature like; very romantic?

Student: No, no, disturbed, unstable.

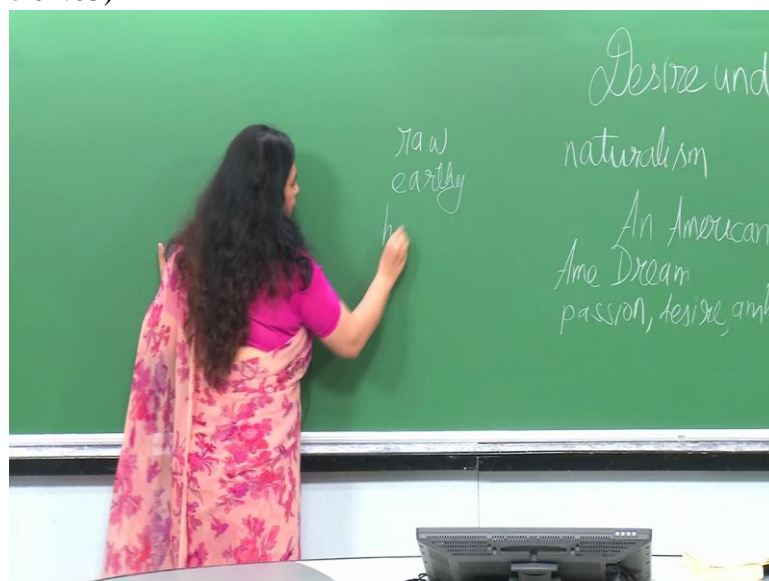
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Student: Nature reflects the conflict between

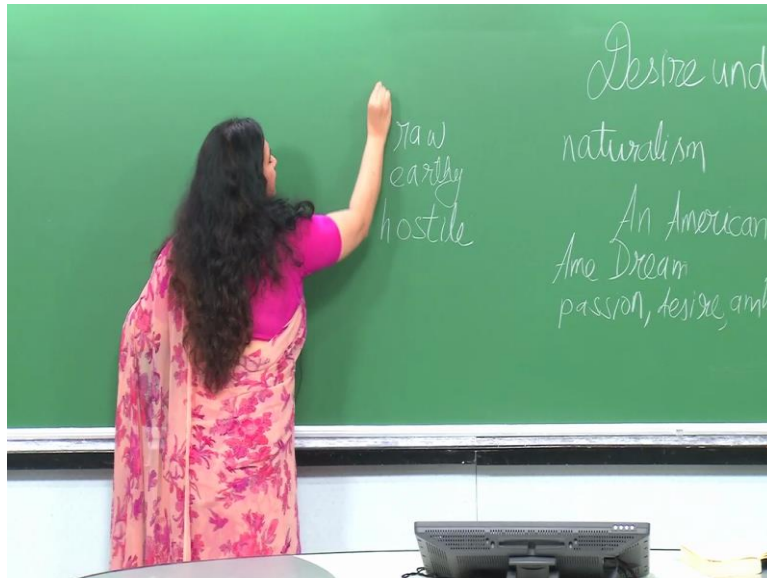
Professor: Ok, so nature is hostile, Ok.

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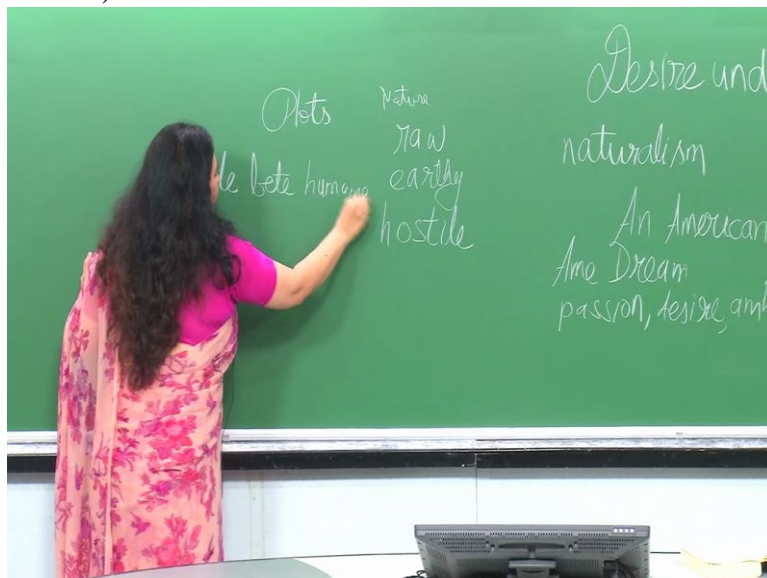
Professor: I also referred to the idea that if you compare it to the great Romantic poets Blake and Coleridge, sorry Wordsworth and Coleridge, so it, the nature, this naturalism is completely opposite to their notion of, and this is read in tooth and claw, nature that rips people apart. Ok, nature is no safe haven for people to hide. Ok and interestingly both came one year after another. Now, this is about nature.

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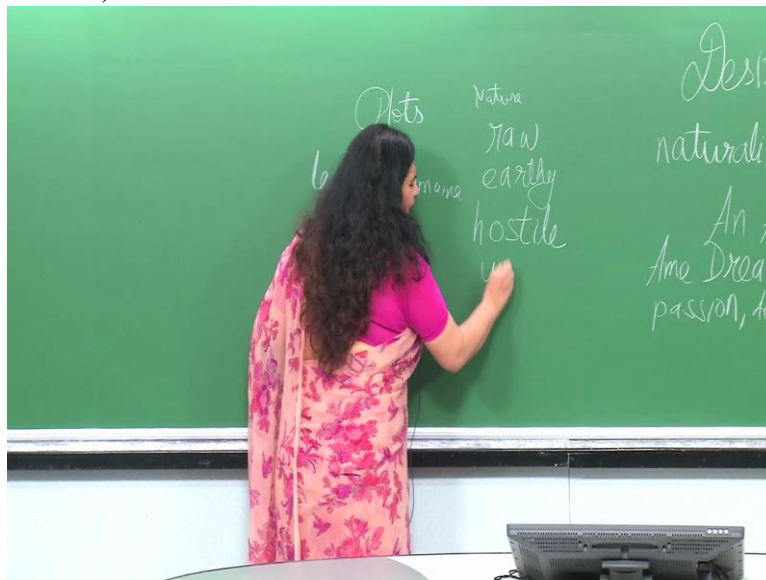
Professor: What about plots? What kinds of plots do you find in naturalism? You have done American Tragedy. What kind of plot is that? Give me that one word that Emile Zola has given you. Emile Zola, we have been talking of Emile Zola who is the father of naturalism, la bête humaine.

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Professor: Ok, so this is the human beast, Ok. Now how, what could be a human beast, it is not a werewolf that Michael Jackson turning into werewolf in Thriller, Ok something else, the beast within, the animal within and what was the, so we were talking about the Desire under the Elms which is a naturalist play. We were also trying to draw some comparisons between another naturalistic work that we have done recently, An American Tragedy by Dreiser and interestingly both plays, both works were published in quick succession of each other, one in 1924 and Dreiser's work in 1925, both of them deal with the concept of American Dream which is characterized by unbridled passion, ambition and desires. Ok we are also talking about nature which in works of natural, all naturalistic plays is raw, earthly, hostile

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Professor: unkind, indifferent, you can add on all these adjectives; unkind and indifferent. Ok and then you have a plot where, what kind of plot was American Tragedy? Remember, did I talk about Darwin?

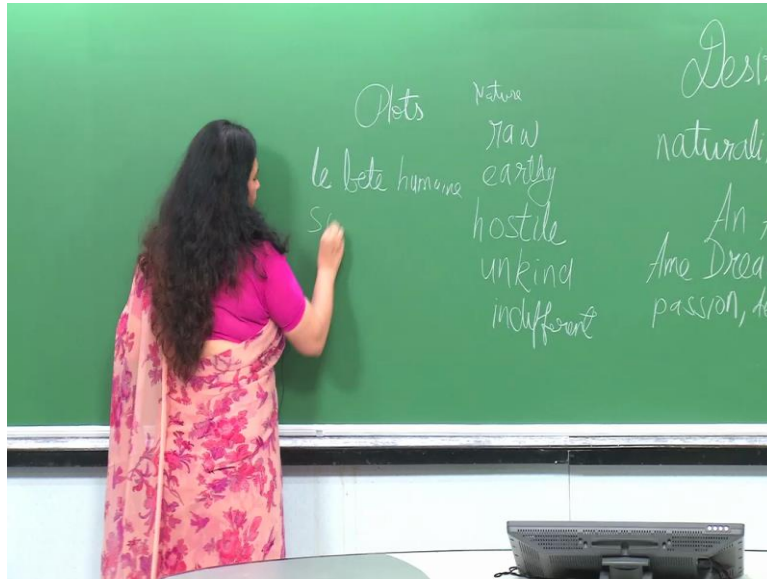
Student: Yeah

Professor: What did Darwin talk about?

Student: Survival of the fittest

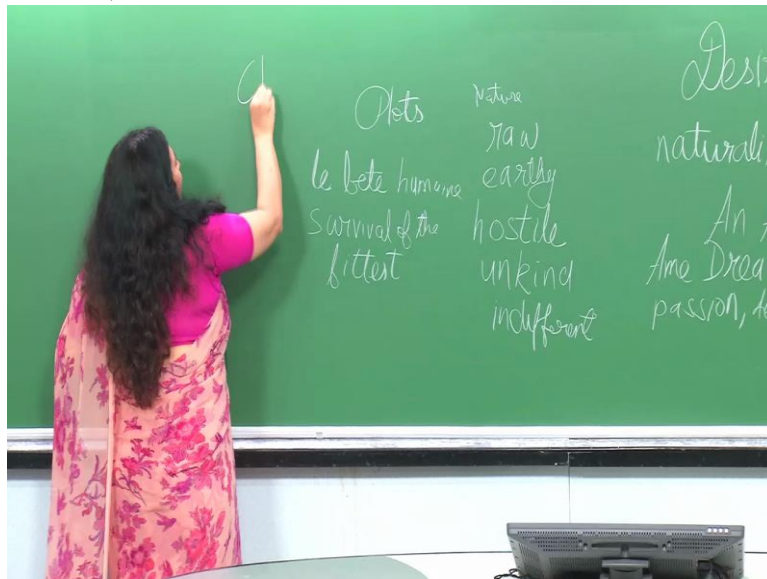
Professor: Survival of the fittest

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Professor: survival of the fittest, La Bête humaine so the human beast has to struggle and kill its own kind in order to survive. That is the idea. Characters, now what are characters driven by?

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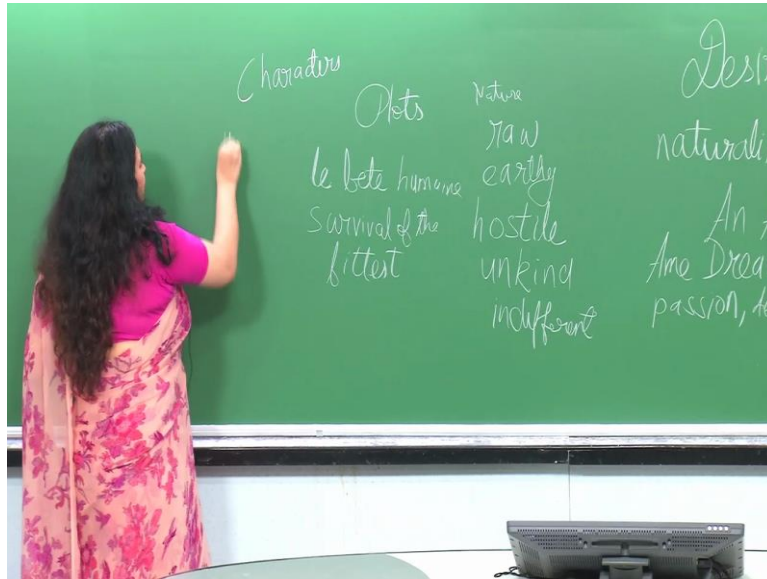
Student: Greed

Professor: Greed, passion, ambition, betrayal. What kinds of, what kinds of social setup they come from?

Student: Very puritan

Professor: We saw both kinds but generally it is about the working class, Ok, so

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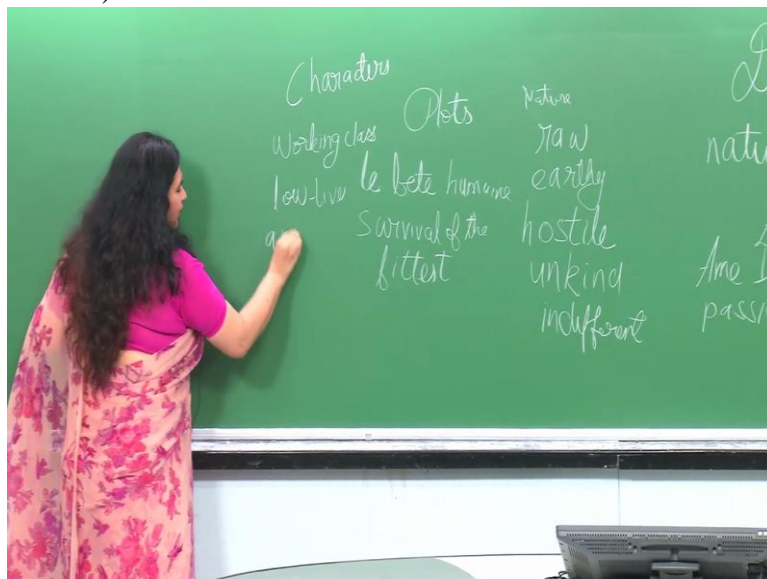


Professor: the working class. Ok, characters are generally low lives, uneducated, Ok that is how Dreiser, ah?

Student: Morality isn't there, central characters they will be

Professor: Amoral characters, good. Amoral characters

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Professor: so this is the backdrop, so go through these points again because we finished American Tragedy just fortnight ago and you have forgotten most of it. Now, O'Neill was a playwright who wrote in the beginning of the twentieth century, Ok along with Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams he is one of the three major American dramatists of the twentieth century. Ok, so what was A View from the Bridge all about? What kind, do you remember anything? If I asked you to

Student: Naturalist

Professor: But, not strictly speaking naturalist because other characters are quite noble and we also discussed Eddie Carbone as an ideal tragic hero, Ok. Now tell me that, it is about the working class people but I am interested in something else now. , when we were talking about the character of the lawyer Alfieri who is the narrator, Ok what other themes have been brought in?

Student: Chorus

Professor: Chorus, Ok, chorus is, yeah so a choric character, and therefore when we are talking about a choric character, the broader form of drama, we are talking about the

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Professor: Greek, the Greek play. Now what are the, if you can, if you can go back to whatever you did in Oedipus, what is the general construction of a Greek play?

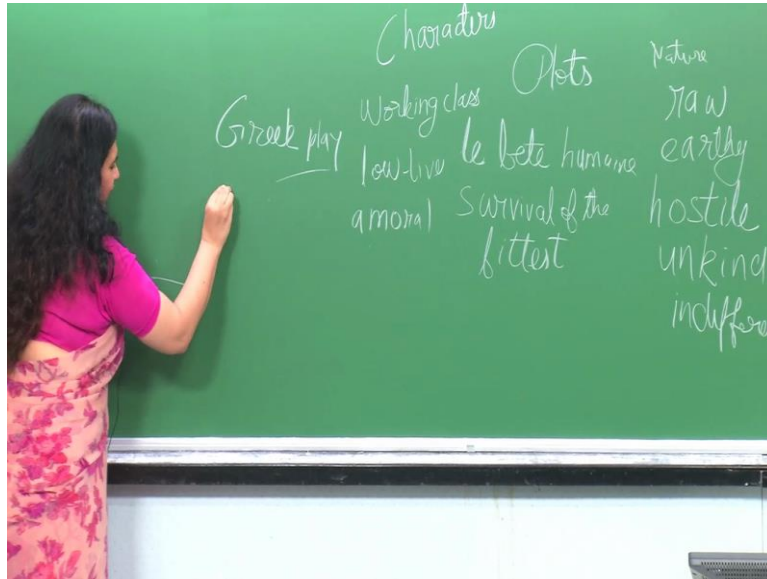
Student: Rising Action and exposition

Professor: OK

Student: Climax

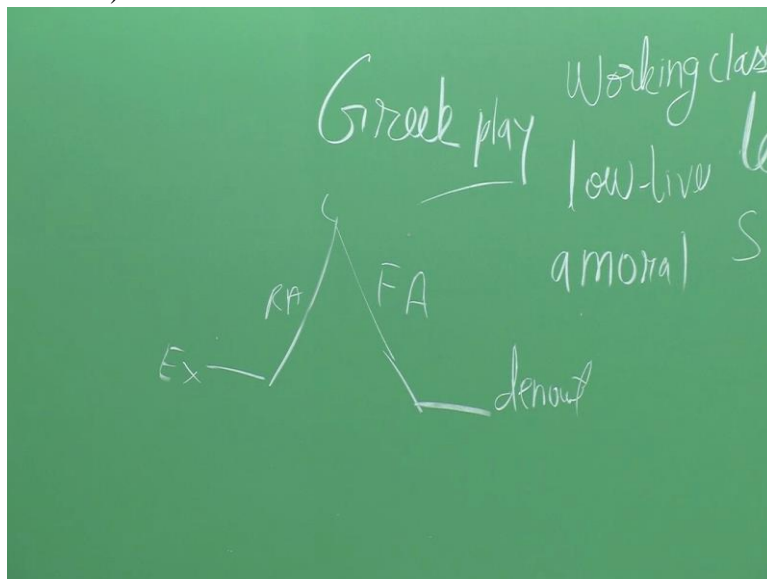
Professor: Ok, so you remember the Freytag's triangle.

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Professor: Ok, rising action, exposition, you have rising action, you have a climax, you have a falling action and you have a dénouement and you have a choric character.

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Professor: When we talked about the concept of a Greek act or a Greek play and when we are talking about a View from the Bridge and then also compare it to Oedipus and other Greek plays, Ok, did we come across, what is the central, what is Eddie Carbone driven by? What is his tragedy?

Student: Heartbreak

Student: Jealousy

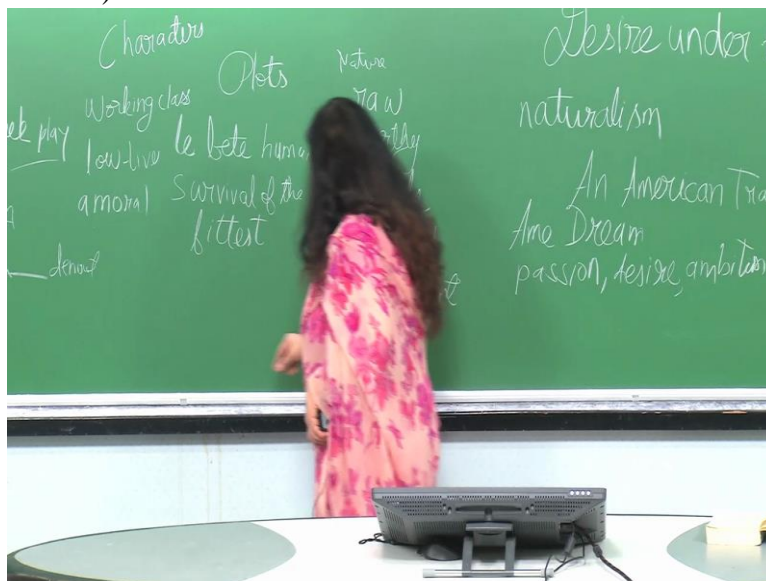
Professor: No, give me one word.

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Professor: What is his jealousy for or

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Professor: what is his passion for?

Student: Lust

Professor: Lust, Ok just lust for whom?

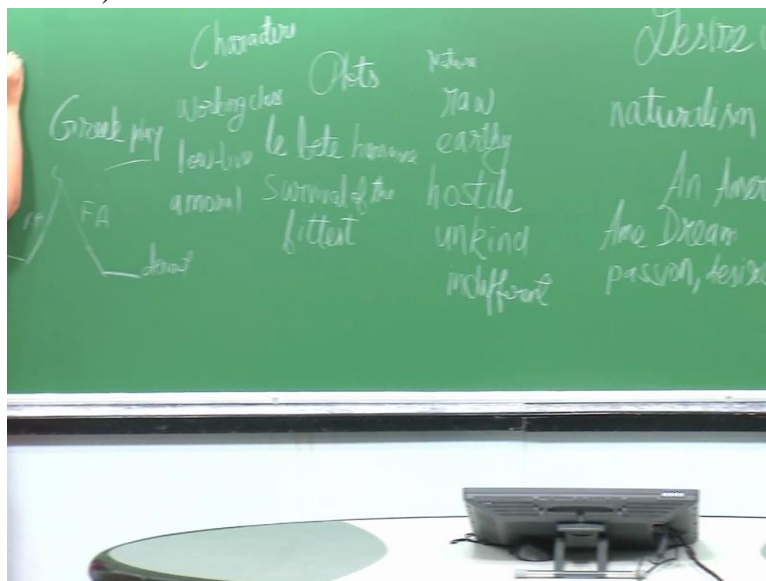
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Student: Incestuous

Professor: Incest, Ok. So

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Professor: incest is also one of the themes that was very often dealt with by the great Greek playwrights and which was also used by the great American playwrights who wanted to write their so-called Greek plays. And why are we calling it the so-called Greek plays; because these were Greek in?

Student: Origin.

Professor: Not origin, it is not like an adaptation, the construction, Ok, the kinds of characters, Ok, employment of choric characters, Ok, then idea of incest, and then take the Greek construction and situate it in American context and then at the same time get

influenced by the then new theories of naturalism and talk about the idea of the low lives, the La Bête humaine, Ok so combining the Greek structure with naturalism, this is what the play, this is how you have to approach the play; combining the Greek plot structure, choric character, and then naturalistic ideas which were at the beginning of the twentieth century. Emile Zola and La Bête humaine, all these theories started in the early part of the twentieth century, so you have to look, immediately after the Decadent period or Aesthetic period. After that we had these people. You know, end of realism, beginning of naturalism. Ok so we have to contextualize the play against that framework. Alright, so now in a Greek play, how many characters do you find? I mean in the sense that how, who are the people? You have done Mourning Becomes Electra

Student: Yeah

Professor: ok so who are the people generally found in a Greek play; characters?

Student: Tragic hero

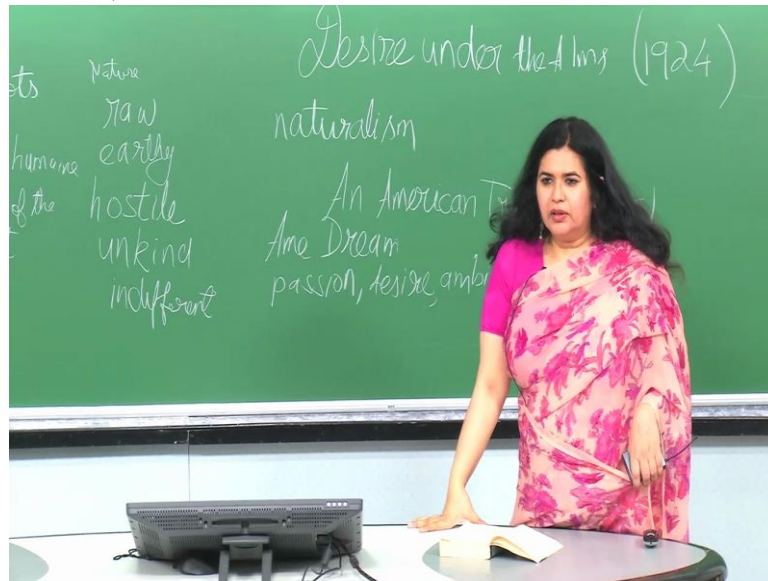
Professor: Ok

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Student: A person who reveals the truth, or

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Professor: Ok

Student: A perfect (())

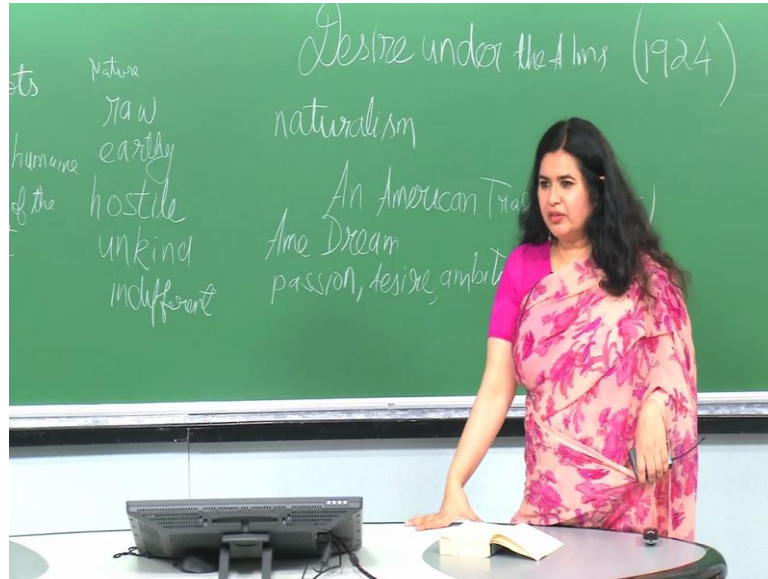
Professor: Generally Greek plays are also characterized, we are talking about incest but then

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Professor: then you know the idea of

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Professor: patricide, parricide, regicide, Ok, what are those? Killing of?

Student: Father

Professor: Father, Ok or rebelling at least

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Professor: against your father, so Oedipus kills his father.

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Student: Father-son

Professor: Right, so all those themes are also implicit in the play, Ok. Now there is another play from which, Greek play, that this play derives from and that I will approach later. First you get all these, the basics clear. So we go on to the characters. Now, now what is, yeah, we are talking about, I have been talking about nature a lot, raw, earthly, hostile, unkind and then you also give me a term called pathetic fallacy where nature assumes human attributes, Ok. Now what is the, what is the meaning of Elms?

Student: Tree

Professor: Yeah, it is a kind of a tree. What does it look like?

Student: Slightly tall

Professor: Tall, Ok, Elms are those tallish trees, very tall, thin Ok and then they drool at the top. Ok and then look at the way the opening description is done. Please look at the text. Ok. There is no scope for much digression and diversion. So it is not Moby Dick now. So you have to get out of that frame of mind and here you will find that you will have minimal characters; which is again a part of an attribute of the classic Greek plays, the minimal characters. How many characters do you remember from Oedipus? The king, his queen and then there is

Student: Creon

Professor: Yeah, Creon, Ok King Creon who is?

Student: Jocasta

Professor: Jocasta's brother and then, choric character then Tiresias, the blind prophet. Apart from that you may not, the messenger who comes here and there,

Student: Shepherd

Professor: Yeah the shepherd, the messenger. Now you look at this play.

(Refer Slide Time 15:42)



Professor: Ephraim Cabot, these are the characters, and then, he is the patriarch, so Greek plays you remember are heavily patriarchal in nature. So yeah, this is about patriarchy. And how this woman comes along and tries to subvert. Now, and then you have 3 sons, Simeon, Peter and Eben and you can well imagine, you can already anticipate what happens when there is a father and he has 3 sons. So Simeon, Peter and Eben and then you have Abbie Putnam. Abbie Putnam is the heroine here. And then you have very few characters; a young girl, 2 farmers, the fiddler, a sheriff and other four from the neighboring farms. The action of the entire play takes place and immediately outside of the Cabot farmhouse in New England in the year 1850. Now what is the setting? 1850 and it is little before the Civil War, American Civil War and it is also the peak period of the Gold Rush, the Californian Gold Rush, are you aware of that period? What happened?

Student: California

Professor: Gold was discovered, Ok so people wanted to migrate to California, Ok and to those regions nearing regions, Ok that is the idea. Alright, now, look at the stage directions. , the south end of the house faces front to a stone wall with a wooden gate and keep on referring or marking all those things that denote nature. So nature is stone wall. And tell me what kinds of people would live in this house? What is the, it is a very melodramatic kind of a place. Everything is up there. All the emotions are larger than life. With a wooden gate at center opening on a country road, the house is in a good condition but in need of paint. Its

walls are sickly grayish, the green of the shutters faded. Two enormous elms are on each side of the house. They bend their trailing branches down over the roof. They appear to protect and at the same time subdue.

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Professor: Now, aren't we getting lot of human attributes, yeah, yeah, how can trees, how can elms subdue and protect? Ok but it is the nature of the, yeah, it is the nature; it is the kind of nature. That's the nature and then look at the house, sickly grayish wall. So definitely so far you won't come across anything that is positive, yeah. So a positive image is not presented at all about it.

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Professor: They bend their trailing branches down over the roof. They appear to protect and at the same time subdue. There is a sinister maternity in their aspect, a crushing, jealous absorption.

(Refer Slide Time 19:00)



What is a sinister maternity? What is maternity?

Student: It is oxymoronic (())

Professor: Well oxymoronic

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Professor: because you feel that maternity; yeah

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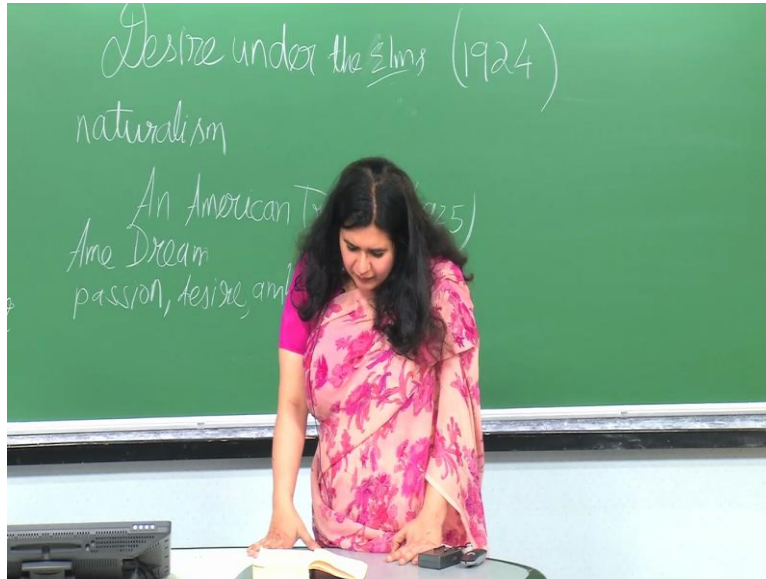


Professor: that, maternal feelings can never be sinister. But then, in the context of this play, they can be. So what is sinister maternity then, maternity then? What is it?

Student: (())

Professor: Why sinister, sinister is devious, devilish, Ok and therefore this is the kind of influence the mother has. Ok, the devilish presence, Ok. See all; Freud gave us his ideas of theories of Oedipus complex, Ok. They all emanate from these ideas; sinister and destructive, aspect of maternity. Motherhood is generally idealized in most cultures but then according to some psychoanalysts, motherhood is after all, you know, it can stunt, it can crush, Ok and which is also true and which is, because they never let go off their children. That is the idea, so they crush their children because of the sinister love. Love can also be crushing, so love can have negativity also.

(Refer Slide Time 20:28)



Professor: They have developed from their intimate contact with the life of man in the house an appalling humaneness.

So there is humaneness but it is, they are human like but that human, it is not very positive humanity, appalling humanity. Ok the man in the house, the father of the house, who is the father of the house?

Student: Ephraim

Professor: Ephraim, yeah.

They brood oppressively over the house.

So again elms are presented as humans, so they brood over the house. They are like exhausted women resting their sagging breasts and hands and hair on its roof, and when it rains their tears trickle down monotonously and rot on the shingles.-

Now what kind of imagery is presented?

Student: It goes with the earlier (()) yeah female

(Refer Slide Time 21:29)



Student: Yeah, who is tired...

Student: I mean female form

Student: Yeah sagging breasts and all.

Professor: She sagged, she is tired, she is exhausted.

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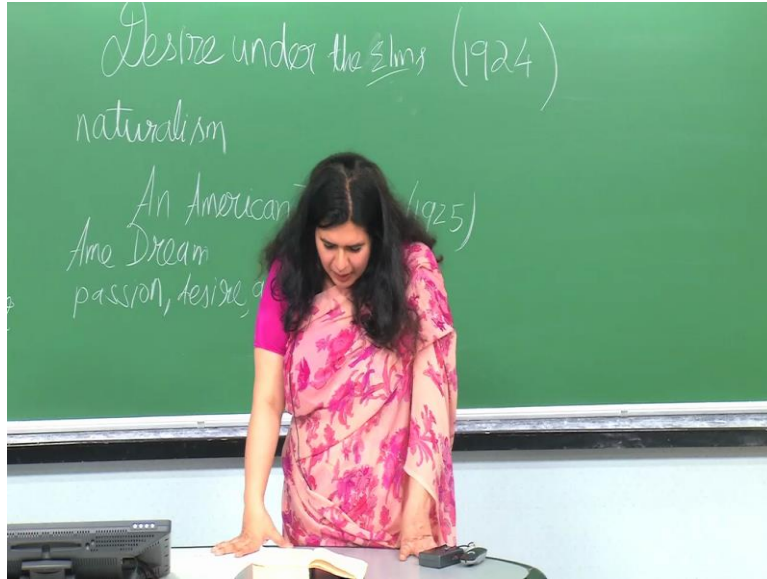


Professor: The man of the house has crushed her and she in turn wants to crush him. Ok, that is the imagery that is presented to us, Ok. Exhaust, it cannot, it is a very dysfunctional family or perhaps a picture, if you apply the modern term. In O'Neill's times, perhaps people didn't use such terms, dysfunctional family. Ok, but nowadays we use it. It's a fashionable term. So if we apply this term here, yeah it's a dysfunctional family; and the tears now, whose tears, Elm's tears?

Student: (())

Professor: They yeah, tear yeah again attributing human attribute qualities to nature.

(Refer Slide Time 22:22)



Professor: There is a path running from the gate around the right corner of the house to the front door. A narrow porch is on this side. The end wall facing us has two windows in its upper story, two larger ones on the floor below.

So this is the stage direction. This is the kind of the house that you are going to have.

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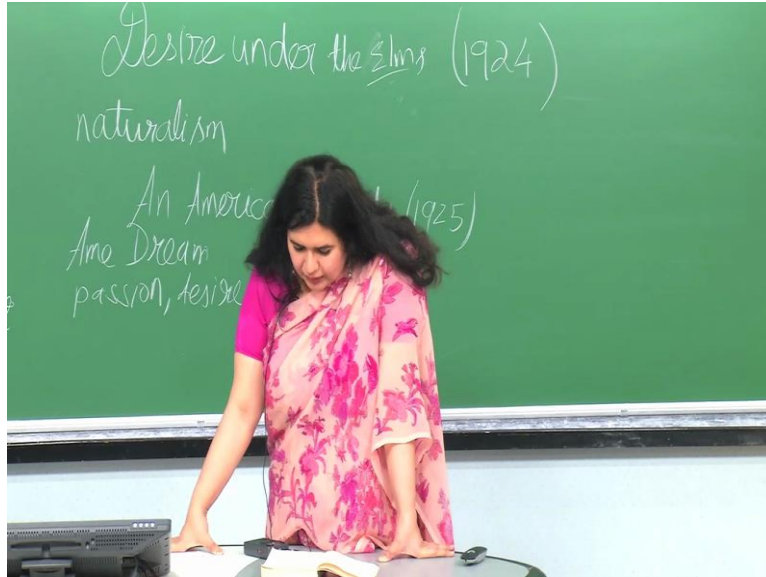


Student: Deep colors, the green of the elms glows, but the house is in shadow, seeming pale and washed out by contrast. A door opens and Eben Cabot comes to the end of the porch and stands looking down the road to the right. He has a large bell in his hand and this he swings

mechanically, awakening a deafening clangor. Then he puts his hands on his hips and stares up at the sky. He sighs with a puzzled awe and blurts out with halting appreciation.

Professor: Ok now wait. , look at the nature again

(Refer Slide Time 23:18)



Professor: sunset of a day at the beginning of summer in the year this so and so. There is no wind and everything is still. The sky above the roof is suffused with deep colors, the green of the elms glows, and the house is in shadow, seeming pale and washed out by contrast. Now Gayatri, you are interested in colors, can you comment on these lines?

(Refer Slide Time 23:44)



Professor: Suffused with deep colors, now O'Neill is not

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Professor: going to give you terms like saturated coloration, Ok because O'Neill does not belong to that, you know, he would not be having that kind of lexicon but then, isn't he talking of saturated colors? Deep, suffused. What, what does it? Isn't it, if you extend the term then don't you think that the stage directions is extremely expressionistic? Yes. This is how, you, this is how you have to extrapolate; so O'Neill is not going to sit here and tell, look I am doing saturation colors, and it is an expressionistic, yeah. You have to read between the lines and look at the stage direction that what the writer is trying to tell you here, Ok so expressionism, if you remember, we are talking about a play published in 1924, expressionist art was something at the peak of that period, Ok and theater and cinema, yes was responding to it, Ok, very positively. Therefore I am very sure that O'Neill, other plays by O'Neill are also extremely expressionistic in nature. Ok, for example we have Emperor Jones and

Student: Tension happening

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Student: between these brothers also

Professor: True, true, that's what we are going to see

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Professor: A door opens and Eben Cabot comes to the door, end of the porch and stands looking down the road to the right. He has a large bell in his hand and this he swings mechanically, awakening a deafening clangor. Then he puts his hands on his hips and stares up at the sky and sighs with a puzzled awe and blurts out with halting appreciation. God! Purty!

Now there is no such word as purty. You have to look at the rural, New England dialect, Ok. So every play comes with a particular dialect. Ok, so perhaps if you remember A View from the Bridge had the so-called Brooklyn Italian dialect, remember. Many a times I would tell

you this is a kind of very specific, to this kind of Italian American working class, Ok. Now here it is the rural, New England, so dialect. So purty is for pity. And why, he looks at the sky. So this is something that every character will do repeatedly in the play, looking at the sky and muttering something, so nature reflecting the mood of the characters. Anu carry on, his eyes

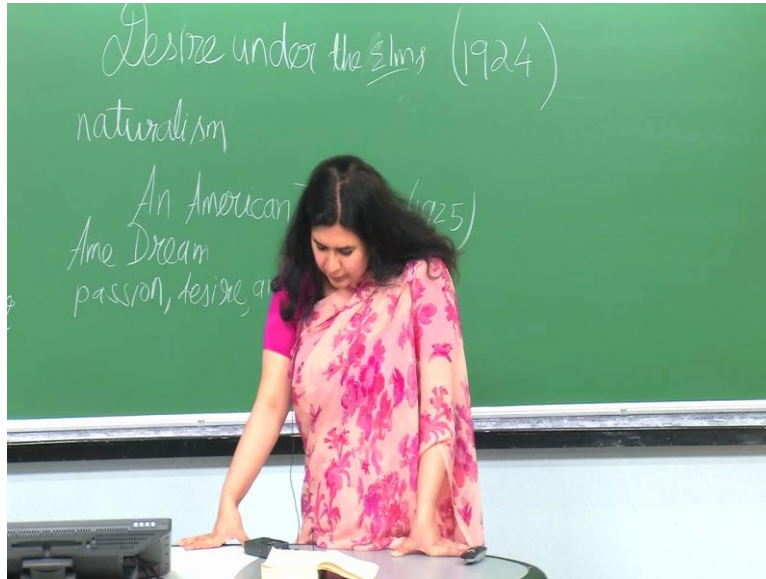
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Student: His eyes fall and he stares about him frowningly. He is 25, tall and sinewy. His face is well-formed, good-looking, but its expression is resentful and defensive. His defiant, dark eyes remind one of a wild animal's in captivity. Each day is a cage in which he finds himself trapped but inwardly unsubdued. There is a fierce repressed vitality about him. He has black hair, mustache, a thin curly trace of beard. He is dressed in rough farm clothes. He spits on the ground with intense disgust, turns and goes back into the house. Simeon and Peter come in from their work in the fields. They are tall men, much older than their half-brother. Simeon is 39 and Peter is 37, built on a squarer, simpler model, fleshier in body, more bovine and homelier in face, shrewder and more practical.

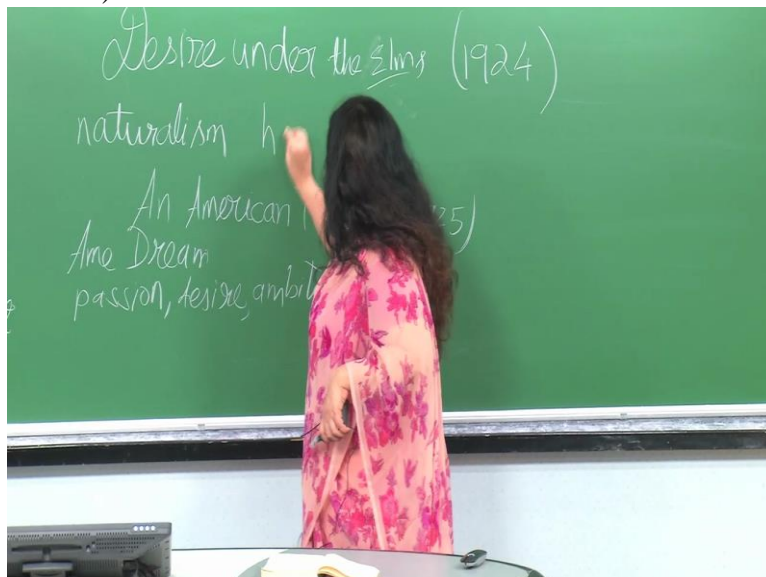
Their shoulders stoop a bit from years of farm work. They clump heavily along in their clumsy thick-soled boots caked with earth. Their clothes, their faces, hands, bare arms and throats are earth-stained. They smell of earth. They stand together for a moment in front of the house and, as if with the one impulse, stare dumbly up at the sky, leaning on their hoes. Their faces have a compressed, unresigned expression. As they look upward, this softens.

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Professor: So Simeon says purty, it's the same motif, repeated again and again. Now who would like to comment on this, is there anything that is left unsaid here? Whatever you want to know about the character, don't you feel that O'Neill has given away everything about the character? So is there anything that you are reading between lines here? Ok, what kinds, there are two brothers here, Simeon and Peter, they are born of one mother and the third, the youngest brother Eben is born of another mother and both mothers are dead; so therefore two elms. Ok, now connect this two, the two elms, and the sinister maternity, Ok, the exhausted women, the tears trickling down. So what kind of a presence is there? So you won't find; it is not a horror movie or horror show here. Ok so you won't find ghosts coming out of nowhere but Ok, there is sadness associated but also the haunting, yeah, it's like

(Refer Slide Time 29:25)



Professor: haunting presence. The mothers may be they have suffered and they have died, Ok and then perhaps the two elms, they symbolize the dead bodies. The elms act as a metaphor for those exhausted, long suffering, tortured women who were just slogged to work, yeah, because it is a hard kind of a farm. Remember it is not a city space you are talking about. It not a, it is a rich man's farm, Ok but even on a rich man's, if he is miserly, stingy kind, stingy sort of a rich man, then he will make his wife work and they died of exhaustion and overwork.

Ok and then there are two sons who are like, what? How different are these two from Eben?

(Refer Slide Time 30:23)

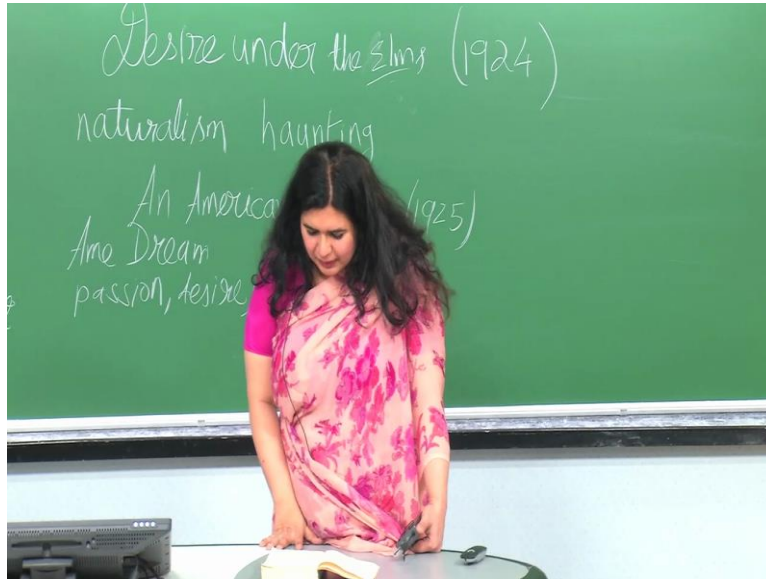


Student: Older

Student: The older one of them is more responsible towards working in the farm

Professor: Ok. Now see

(Refer Slide Time 30:33)



Professor: in Eben there is a repressed and fierce vitality, Ok that is his masculinity being talked about where as these 2 men, Simeon and Peter, they are tall and built on a squarer similar model, Ok almost like a (()) fleshier in body, more bovine and homelier, what is bovine, cow like and what is cow-like men? Well, domesticated kind of men where as Eben is not, he is a different kind of a man, and homelier also.

(Refer Slide Time 31:15)



Student: Purty.

Student: Ay-eh.

Student: 18 years ago.

Student: What?

Student: Jenn. My woman. She died.

Student: I'd fergot.

Student: I rec'lect--now an' agin. Makes it lonesome. She'd hair long's a hoss' tail--an' yaller like gold!

Student: Waal--she's gone.

Professor: Now, it's like, well

Student: Well

Professor: Well, she is gone.

Student: They's gold in the West, Sim.

Student: Waal--in a manner o' speakin'--thar's the promise. Gold in the sky--in the West--Golden Gate--Californi-a!--Goldest West!--fields o' gold!

Student: Fortunes layin' just atop o' the ground waitin' t' be picked!

Professor: Solomon's mines

Student: Solomon's mines, they says!

Professor: For a moment they continue looking up at the sky--then their eyes drop.

Student: Here--it's stones atop o' the ground--stones atop o' stones--makin' stone walls--year atop o' year--him 'n' yew 'n' me 'n' then Eben--makin' stone walls fur him to fence us in!

Student: We've wuked. Give our strength. Give our years. Plowed 'em under in the ground--rottin'--makin' soil for his crops! Waal--the farm pays good for hereabouts.

Student: If we plowed in Californi-a, they'd be lumps o' gold in the furrow!

Student: Californi-a's t' other side o' earth, a'most. We got t' calc'late--

Student: 'Twould be hard fur me, too, to give up what we've 'arned here by our sweat.

Student: Ay-eh. Mebbe--he'll die soon.

Student: Mebbe

Student: Mebbe--fur all we knows--he's dead now.

Student: Ye'd need proof.

Student: He's been gone two months--with no word. Left us in the fields an evenin' like this. Hitched up an' druv off into the West. That's plumb

Professor: Unnatural

Student: Unnatural. He hain't never been off this farm 'ceptin' t' the village in thirty year or more, not since he married Eben's maw.

Student: I calc'late we might git him declared crazy by the court.

Student: He skinned 'em too slick. He got the best o' all on 'em. They'd never b'lieve him crazy. We got t' wait--till he's underground.

Professor: Honor thy father!

Student: (())

Professor: Yes

(Refer Slide Time 33:24)



Professor: Ok, Sona do you have the text? Yeah, read for Eben

(Refer Slide Time 33:29)



Student: Honor thy father! I pray he's dead. Supper's ready.

Student: Ay-eh...

Student: Sun's downin' purty.

Student: Ay-eh. Yonder atop o' the hill pasture, ye mean?

Student: In Californi-a!

Student: I air hungry!

Professor: I am hungry. I are hungry

Student: I smells bacon!

Student: Bacon's good!

Student: Bacon's bacon!

Professor: They turn, shouldering each other, their bodies bumping and rubbing together as they hurry clumsily to their food, like two friendly oxen

So,

(Refer Slide Time 34:13)



Professor: look at the animal imagery. First they are compared with bovine, yeah and now it is ox, and what do these animals do? They just work to death. You make an ox; ox is not a dangerous animal. It can't do anything.

Student: Make them work all the time

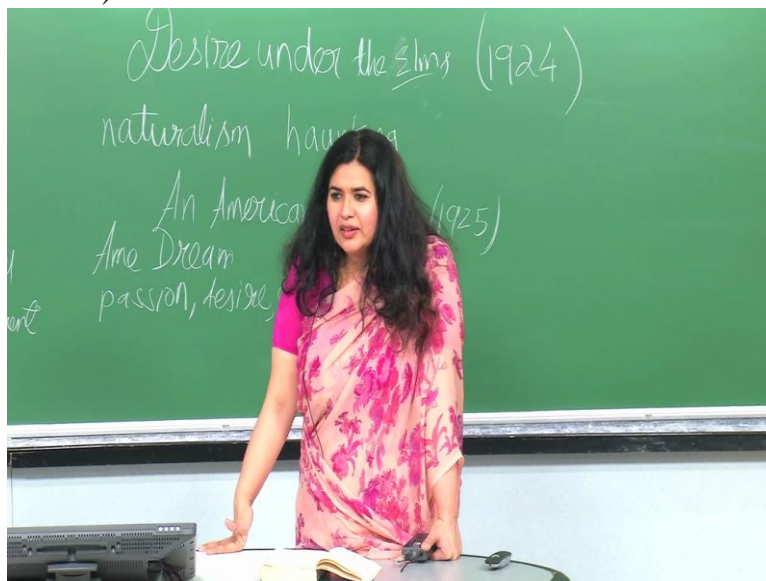
Professor: Yeah and how

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Professor: he kept mothers working all the time, he skinned them, Ok, to death.

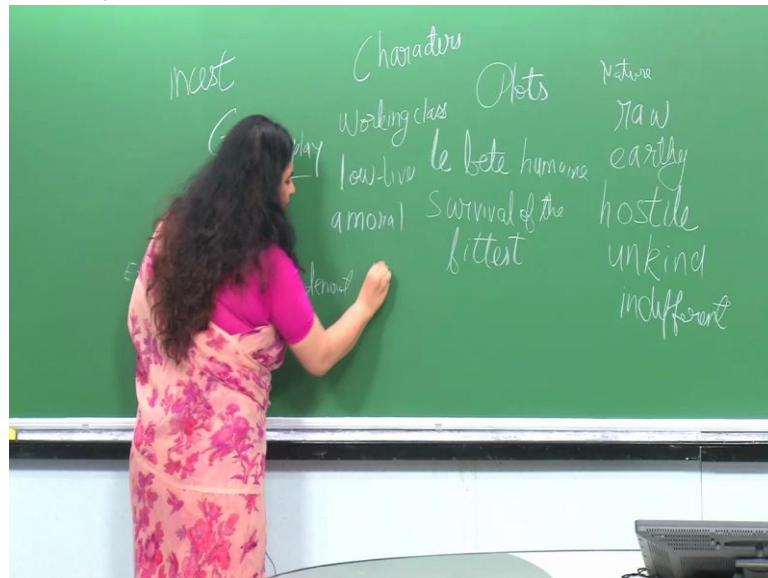
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Professor: So that's the kind of family they come from. They are used to hard work. They are, and look at the other imagery also. Peter says stones atop o' the ground--stones atop o' stones--makin' stone walls; don't you think there is poetry even in this rustic dialect. It is almost like Wordsworth's poem. Ok. There is poem called Michael by Wordsworth. If you aren't familiar with Michael, so it is a very beautiful, yeah, Michael is an old farmer. He works and works and works and then he dies but then nature there is very friendly, Ok a very compassionate, yeah but here, so much of stone imagery, it is like hardened people.

They do not care for each other. What do they think of? Gold in California and when will this old man die so that we can inherit his farm. OK because who is not like and who don't sympathize with the father because we have already been told, he has worked the mothers to death. So again we go back to the naturalist characters. And what are the naturalist, the La Bête humaine, ok the animal like Ok and who ever survives. So mothers were not up to is so they couldn't survive. But these two sons survived. And the third one is also trying to cope with the harshness of his father. But then all, this is another characteristic of naturalist text

(Refer Slide Time 36:21)



Professor: unsympathetic characters. Very objectively drawn, not sympathetically, not subjectively but it is only, he is trying to present a kind of character. These are working class people, Ok and this is how they are going to be. You won't find any finer sensibilities in them. Because where will it come from? That is the idea.

Scene 2

Student: The color fades from the sky. Twilight begins. The interior of the kitchen is now visible. A pine table is at center, a cook-stove in the right

(Refer Slide Time 37:00)



Student: rear corner, four rough wooden chairs, a tallow candle on the table. In the middle of the rear wall is fastened a big advertizing poster with a ship in full sail and the word "California" in big letters. Kitchen utensils hang from nails. Everything is neat and in order but the atmosphere is of a men's camp kitchen rather than that of a home.

Places for three are laid. Eben takes boiled potatoes and bacon from the stove and puts them on the table, also a loaf of bread and a crock of water. Simeon and Peter shoulder in, slump down in their chairs without a word. Eben joins them. The three eat in silence for a moment, the two elder as naturally unrestrained as beasts of the field, Eben picking at his food without appetite, glancing at them with a tolerant dislike.

Professor: Ok so this is the third time that

(Refer Slide Time 37:49)



Professor: O'Neill is referring to them as animals, so beast of burden, Ok, beasts of the field and then you have, Ok so now if you just visualize the entire setup. , so this is the interior of and then the dining table is placed in the kitchen like most American homes and you have all the kitchen utensils hanging around, Ok but what is so important, what is so significant of this setup is, in the middle of the rear wall is fastened a big advertising poster, Ok with a ship in full sail and the word California.

So what is the idea here? Going to California, California is that American Dream, that American Paradise. So this farmhouse is something they want to escape. And California symbolizes the American Dream, the desires, the ambitions; so all these men have desires of their own. Ok so the brothers desire to go to California some day. The father desires to keep the sons home so that he can make them work to death. Ok, but he is not going to let them inherit anything till he dies. Ok so he is going to stay. This is the kind of conflict. So therefore it is necessary that this kind of father dies. That is what O'Neill is telling us.

(Refer Slide Time 39:19)



Student: Looky here! Ye'd oughtn't t' said that, Eben.

Student: 'Twa'n't righteous.

Student: What?

Student: Ye prayed he'd died.

Student: Waal--don't yew pray it?

Student: He's our Paw.

Student: Not mine!

Student: Ye'd not let no one else say that about yer Maw! Ha!

Student: I hai'nt

Professor: I meant--I hain't his'

Student: I hain't like him--he hain't me!

Student: Wait till ye've growed his age!

Student: I'm Maw--every drop o' blood!

Professor: Ok, you understand this?

(Refer Slide Time 39:56)



Professor: I am not like paw at all. Therefore he even disowns him completely. I am not his. Ok so these two, they have their low life kind of humor, Ok they say don't say that. Otherwise you will be abusing your mother. You are saying something derogatory about your mother, that this is not your father. Then he says what I mean is I am not at all like him. Every blood, drop of my blood is my maw. Again look at the, we are talking about mothers haunt the play. Ok. Not for the older brothers, but for Eben, he is completely obsessed and more you read the, the more you get into the play, you will realize that how much he is possessed by the presence of his dead mother.

Student: (()) says how is the camp kitchen and not a home

Professor: Yeah, a woman makes to the kitchen?

(Refer Slide Time 40:51)



Student: (())

(Refer Slide Time 40:58)



Professor: And it is all stone, yeah and dry.

Professor: Once in a while, they look at the sky, there is a warm glow of orange and they call it pretty otherwise its dark, colorless, grayish, hard way of life for them. Yes

(Refer Slide Time 41:14)



Student: She was good t' everyone.

Professor: Eben, greatly moved, gets to his feet and makes an awkward bow to each of them--
stammering

(Refer Slide Time 41:24)



(Refer Slide Time 41:25)



Student: I be thankful t' ye. I'm her--her heir.

Professor: I am her heir.

(Refer Slide Time 41:30)



Professor: I inherit her.

(Refer Slide Time 41:33)



Student: An' fur thanks he killed her!

Student: No one never kills nobody. It's allus somethin'.

Professor: It is always something.

Student: That's the murderer.

Student: Didn't he slave Maw t' death?

Student: He's slaved himself t' death. He's slaved Sim 'n' me 'n' yew t' death--on'y none o' us hain't died--yit.

Student: It's somethin'--drivin' him--t' drive us!

Student: Waal--I hold him t' jedgment! Somethin'! What's somethin'?

Student: Dunno.

Student: What's drivin' yew to Californi-a, mebbe? Oh, I've heerd you but you will never go to the gold fields.

Student: Mebbe

Student: What wil you get the money?

Student: We kin walk. It's an a'mighty ways--Californi-a--but if yew was t' put all the steps we've walked on this farm end t' end we'd be in the moon!

Student: The Injuns will skulp ye on the plains.

Professor: You know the Indians

(Refer Slide Time 42:34)



Professor: therefore Injuns. So Injuns will scalp you on the way. You know, you will be. This is a time when Indians were an extremely hostile presence. Ok, so we are talking about the late nineteenth century. This is the middle, mid nineteenth century. This is the period where the war between the settlers and the Indians was at its peak. And Indians would scalp people, take away their scalp. This was their way of proclaiming victory. Yes

Student: We'll mebbe make 'em pay a hair fur a hair!

Student: But t'ain't that. Ye won't never go because ye'll wait here fur

(Refer Slide Time 43:15)



Student: yer share o' the farm, thinkin'

Professor: always

Student: always he'll die soon.

Student: We've a right.

Student: Two thirds belongs t' us.

Student: Ye've no right! She wa'n't yewr Maw! It was her farm! Didn't he steal it from her? She's dead. It's my farm.

Student: Tell that t' Paw--when he comes! I'll bet ye a dollar he'll laugh--fur once in his life. Ha!

Student: Ha!

Student: What've ye got held agin (against) us, Eben? Year arter year it's skulked in yer eye--somethin'.

Student: Ay-eh.

Student: Ay-eh. They's somethin'. Why didn't ye never stand between him 'n' my Maw when he was slavin' her to her grave--t' pay her back fur the kindness she done t' yew?

Student: Waal--the stock'd got t' be watered.

Student: And they was woodin' t' do.

Student: And plowin'.

Student: And hayin'.

Student: And spreadin' manure.

Student: And weedin'.

Student: And prunin'.

Student: And milkin'.

Professor: Again observe the poetic cadence of this.

(Refer Slide Time 44:17)



Professor: They may be rustics but they still have poetry in them. Ok, so what were you doing when my mother was suffering; so there was so much of work, we just couldn't pay attention to, very domestic people, yes

(Refer Slide Time 44:35)



Student: An' makin' walls--stone atop o' stone--makin' walls till yer heart's a stone ye heft up out o' the way o' growth onto a stone wall t' wall in yer heart!

Professor: It is again the same imagery, hardness,

(Refer Slide Time 44:50)



Professor: harshness, stony, yeah this is what you are.

(Refer Slide Time 44:57)



Student: We never had no time t' meddle.

Student: Yew was fifteen afore yer Maw died--an' big fur yer age. Why didn't ye never do nothin'?

Student: They was chorus t' do

Professor: Chores

Student: Sorry chores to do, wasn't they? It was only after she died that I came to think of it. Me cookin'--doin' her work--that made me know her, suffer her sufferin'--she'd come back t' help--come back t' bile potatoes--come back t' fry bacon--come back t' bake biscuits--come back all cramped up

Professor: Ok we stop here. The idea is that

(Refer Slide Time 45:28)



Professor: my mother is not still free even in her grave. She has been, she has suffered so much. This man has made her suffer so much and therefore idea of crushing maternity. So it is not like mother will actually come from the dead but it's the spectre that looms large in the background. So we will continue with the same play tomorrow.

(Professor – student conversation ends)