**Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing**
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Lecture - 28
Student Responses (I)

This lecture is titled Student Responses, part 1. And in this lecture, we are going to again present the work that the students have done. We have ensured that there is some kind of linear structure to these reports that the students have presented. So, as to maintain clarity of content and the discussion we have conducted followed by work undertaken by the students, so this particular lecture deals with mime and plot.

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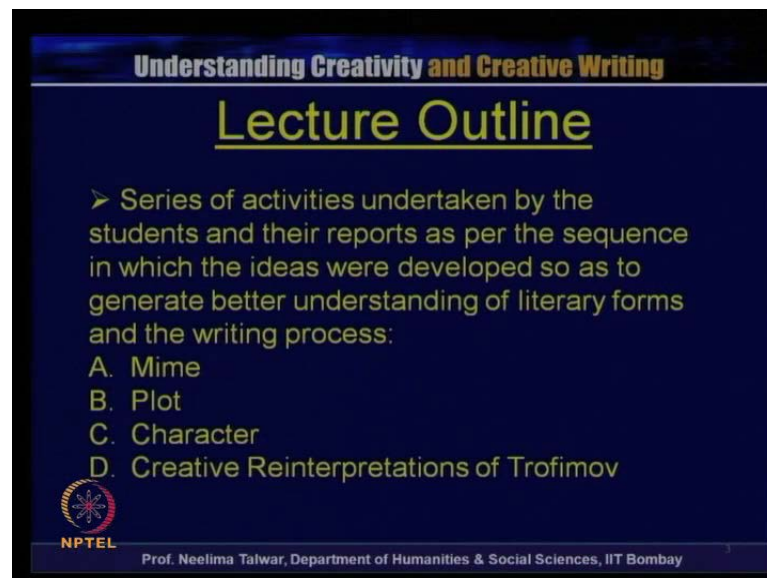
While writing a mime, the writer and the blank page have a very intense relationship with each other and the blank page offers infinite possibilities. Keeping this in mind, I had written a mime for the students, which was read earlier, I will just briefly read out the titles of this mime mainly to draw your attention to the fact. That even while performing a mime you have to think of the script, you have to craft it in order that the ideas are fulfilled although wordlessly.

This mime is titled playing by the book and the locale is any enclosed space and as you recollect the actor enters with the chair. So, this was part one of that mime, in which the actor picks the book and towards the end in frustration (( )) the book. In part 2 of the

mime, you have the same actor dealing with the act of writing and all the struggles that the actor experiences. And then finally, the play the mime ends with the triumphant shout.
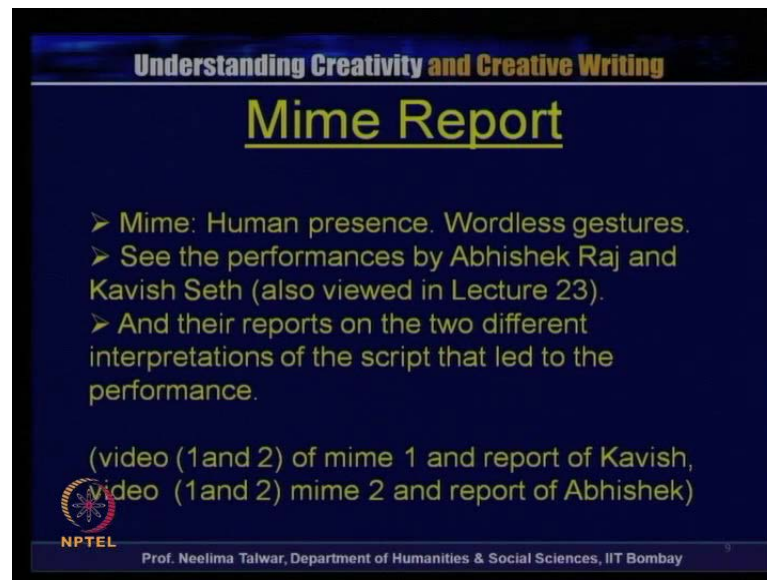
You would notice that the two students who read the mime, they presented it in two different ways. But I would to like to highlight again another relationship that I like you to keep in mind, while looking at that mime and listening to the report presented by the students.

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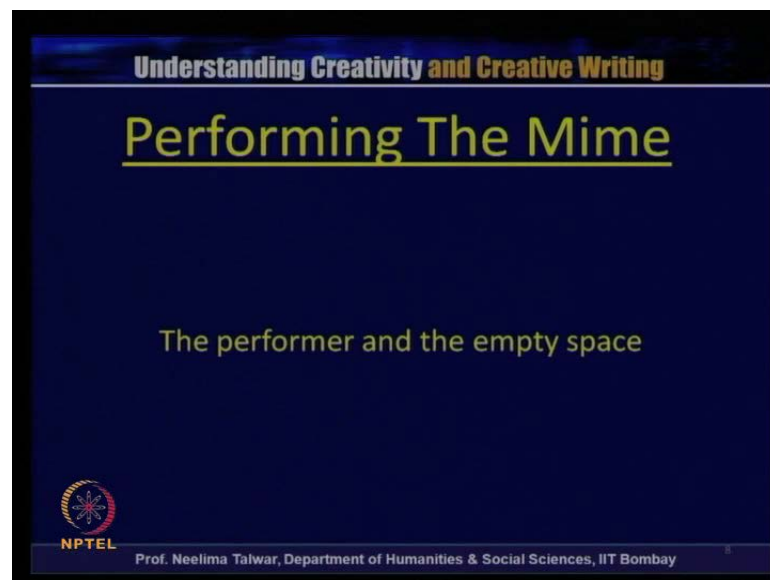
For the performer, is the empty space, which creates a sense of meaningful interaction, the space is filled by the imagined acts of the performers. In some ways you can say that the page and the space or the stage coheless during a performance do keep this idea in mind think about it.

Now, we would have Abhishek Raj and Kavish Seth present their mime in its completeness earlier we had broken it into two units, now they we would put the two units together. And after the performance each one will present their own approach to the performance to the act of interpretation which led to the enactment. So, here is the presentation, the performance and then the report by the two students (( )), when I read the play I was wondering why would one throw the books, so furiously there was just extremism in the character, he was intense. In the first act his frustration is enormous, he is frustrated; he is not able to connect with himself behead his own novel he wrote or someone else's novel or a book from his school or college, he throws it away. Based on those ideas me and my partner Abhishek Raj we discussed the possibilities of the character, what it can be, who it can be.

I was the college student yeah who is unhappy with what is been taught he wants to learn but not by the methods used by teachers now a days. He does not want the things to be imposed on him for example, you have to read this chapter number 2, there will be an exam tomorrow, he is strongly opposed to such ideas. So, has he goes about reading the book he was told to this anger, frustration builds up; why is not anyone able to understand the simple fact that we are here to learn not to be imposed upon by mere facts of major or by some teachings.

So, as a consequence throws it away he is, so frustrated this is why this happens and in act two, he is in his own space there are guitar there is a guitar their, there are books their there is a play, which he is writing. And he is thinking about the play, he he is writing down an act of that play, he is thinking you can see him walking here and there and then checking out the books, checking out the surroundings what influences him and that is how the act goes. So, the way the scene starts it it actually has no beginning or an end, it just shows him in his creative process he is writing he is thinking and that is how it fades.

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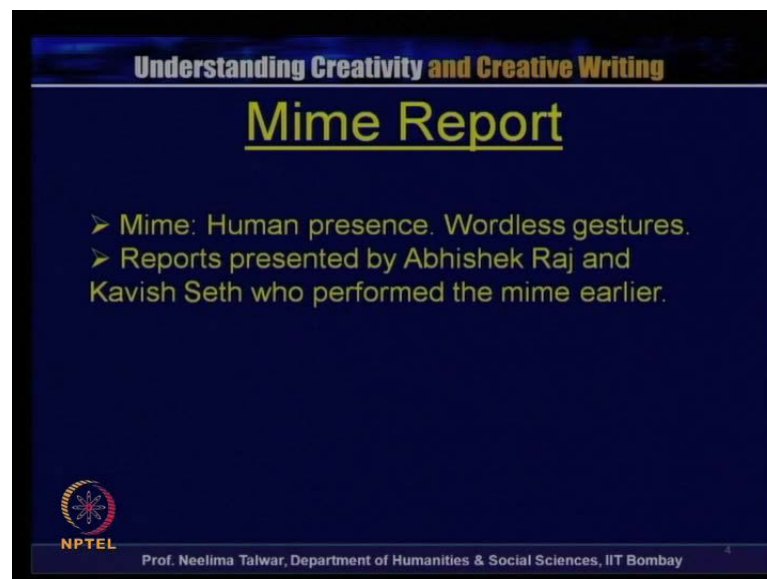
So, this is a my report about the mime that I performed for the course, when I first read the mime script I immediately related to it, because I felt that it tells a very real story about the process of the creative writing. It combines everything it combines the frustration and anguish of failing initially when you try and the creative blocks that come with the process of writing. And it also apple conveys the unbridle jubilation an accessey of finishing a creative piece or actually finishing something. It happily summarizes the comfort and the deep satisfaction of finding one owns personal space and being comfortable and submitting oneself completely to the creative process and to the joy your writing.

In the first part of the mime you see a writer, he is struggling with some kind of mental blocks, some kind of inability to find words to express his emotions. His emotions are true their deep emotions but he is unable to find the language to express them, he is

unable to find his voice. The book that we see him pick up he seems gripped by dentually, but later he experiences some kind of anger, frustration and that leads to him throwing the book forcefully.

This can that book can be thought of us any piece on good writing or the work of any famous canonized writer. His anger I interprerated it as coming from his frustration, that he himself cannot write like there he himself cannot express his bottled of emotions by putting words on a page the way those writers have done. In the beginning of the second part we see that the writers resolute, his purposeful, he is ready to counter all the antagonistic forces that were inhibiting him previously from writing.

He carries a pen and a sheet of a papers and he begins writing initially we see that he he struggles much like he had done before, his he is hesitant, he is not confident. We see him countering those internal creative demons that he had faced in the previous scene but slowly we see that something almost transcendental is happening. He begins to let himself lose his movements become more relaxed, he is calmer, he is more at peace, with himself he is writing with increased surety, smoothness and he begins to as he writes.

This humming seems to energize him he stands up and continuous to hum with increasing frequency and intensity and his writing also becomes faster. And finally, we see that his his joy is just unbounded when he finishes his piece. And he is accomplish where he is set out to do he found his internal voice and that ecstasy is basically meant to be a tribute to the process of writing and to the release of that pent of frustration. And that release which came about through the process of creative writing.

As you notice by now the purpose of the mime exercise which I hope you enjoyed you can try it out on your own also, because I think that is the more important part you should experience it yourself. But at the same time let me point out, what we really have considered in developing this activity.

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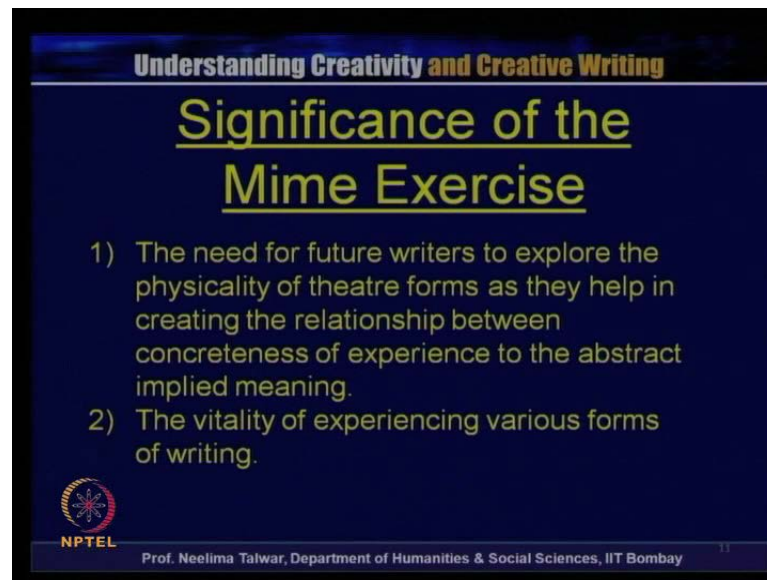
We wanted you to grasp the significance of physical presence of actors in per formative empty space, because there is a kind of tension between that empty space and the act enactment by any individual. And each gesture, each movement finally, in a micro sense also all these activities they lead to the creation of symbolic representation. So, I think this sense of detail meticulor sense of detail that needs to be understood while looking at mimes. But also while writing plays, I think the mime example should really help you understand that verbalizations.

Therefore, in any other form of drama these are highly crafted, carefully crafted artistic processes that build on the physicality of theatre. So, this is this physicality of theatre, this this physicality of experience of this art form is what I would really like you to understand experience. And you can use that in any way you desire for any kind of writing, but I think it will you know release some interesting energies in you.
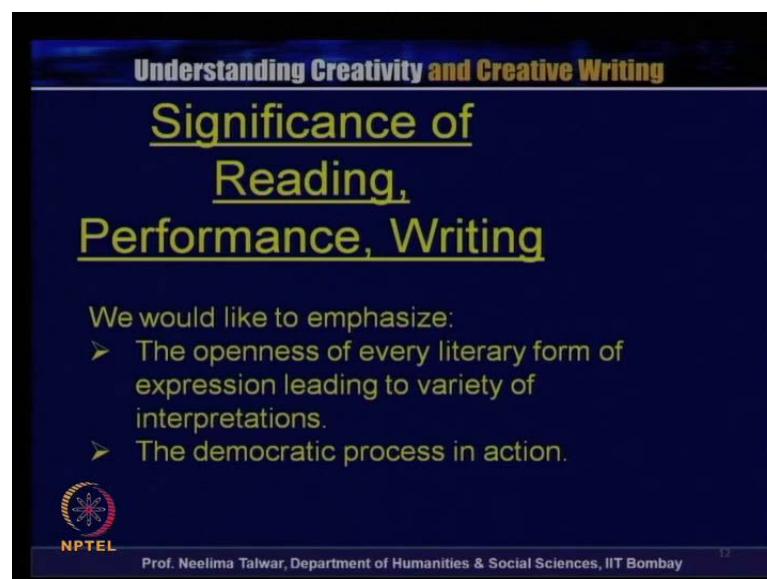
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We wanted the future writers to explore the physicality of theatre, because it also helps in understanding the relationship between concreteness of experiences and the abstract implied meaning. So, essentially it is a sort of desire to help you enjoy the experience of doing by also the act of performance you can develop short units, like this mime which are do able even in the kyotic, you know sort of movement of a regular semester. As you saw these students were able to undertake these interpretive activities, undertake their own rehearsal discussion and perform the mime for you, so it is very, very do able.

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The other idea that unlike to bring to your attention is the significance of the reading, performance and writing. So, when you write the script later on somebody is going to read it, perform it and while writing also there are multiple meanings that may emerge. As I had said earlier, the writer may not intend those meanings in the same way but it is up to the reader to see meaning if they find that you know that is the way the peace the writing works for them. So, in that sense both for the writer and for the reader, there is this openness of every literary form and in that sense, when the two students offered their interpretations this was really the democratic process in action.

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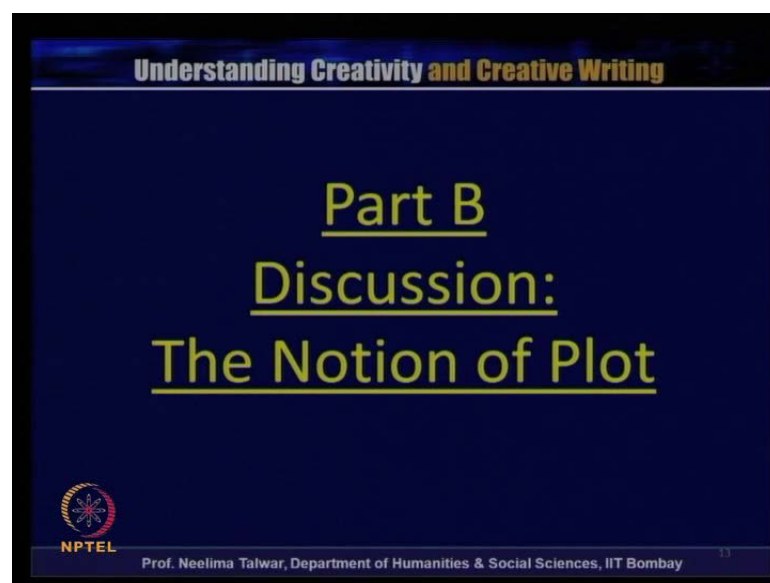
After discussing mime and also the physicality of mime and in some ways the prime module nature of this act of representation at now like to shift to the notion of plot. Because this was another important discussion that we had conducted in our elective and also with you in this course. Now, so far as the notion of plot is concerned you would remember that gardener had problematised, the aristotelian plot structures specially the notion of energia.

Because, he felt that this particular notion has been in some ways rejected by the moderness he had talked about po in particular, po onwards that (( )) po onwards. He had pointed out how many of the you know short story writers had rejected this notion of energic plot structure, which move in a very definite way, in terms of the aristotelian plot structure, in terms of a resolution and also in terms of a high point of conflict.

Now, on the one hand the Greek model has been rejected by some of the moderness specially those who feel that the modern character, for the modern human being had undergone such a lot of change. That a very unified integrated structure of the Aristotelian variety, did not really hold the attention or the world view of the writer and therefore, consequently the reader also. At the same time even though Aristotelian plot structure in that sense should not be followed in a very literal manner but I think you we should note that the notion of plot remains very crucial. And so far as Aristotle is concerned actually there are 20th century writers who swear by the Aristotelian plot structure.

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I had earlier mentioned Albert Camus who valued the sense of destiny in Greek tragedies in while writing his plays although I had also pointed out that he was, so experimental in terms of the new ideas. And also in terms of you know creating new kind of fiction to fit his zerdist world view, but when it came to writing place he was greatly gripped by the Greek model. Because he felt that Greek tragedies offered a very deep sense of the human destiny.

It is very interesting to note that even post moderness, especially post moderness, experimental theatre practitioners also actually have gone back to the grand classics of the past. This again I had touched on earlier too, so I would not repeat that but I thought it would be appropriate to mention that Richard Schechter for example, who whose

environmental theatre is a very prime example of American amagur. He had pointed out while introducing the film which was made of Dionysus in 69 his very famous production.

He had pointed out that he loved the Greek tragediance and I was trying to figure out the words that he had improvised in this conversation in order to explain why he loved the Greek tragediance. Because on the one hand he had completely dismantled the plot structure of Euripides on whose play Dionysus in sixty nine is based. But at the same time what he said was rather interesting and important, he pointed out that the reason he loves the Greek tragediance is because they saw ineluctably irresolube irresoluble human situation a problem that cannot be solved.

So, there tragic vision revolve around problems that cannot be solved and he added in his own way interesting style that is because the problem is existence. So, in that sense again whether you look at some of the moderness or some of the experimental; you know practitioners or the amagur you find that the Greek model, may not persist in a very literal sense but the spirit of the plot. In terms of the sense of tragic magnitude that has continued to hold great attention in terms of the theatre form and it is link to the projection of human destiny.

So, then Aristotelian plot structure on the one hand should not be followed in a very literal fashion but it would be naive to believe that it does not really offer some very, very powerful paradigms. In fact, there are other ways of approaching the Aristotelian plot structure. And we thought that it is actually suitable to bring in another take on the Aristotelian plot structure, which Brenda Laurel at you know analyze at length in a famous classic by now titled computers as theatre.

The reason I wanted the students specially some of the selected students, you know I will explain what; that means, in a minute but I wanted them to have a look at this study. Because we are actually committed to this interface between art and science, literature and science literature and technology. Some of the students had verbalized the need to take home ideas from this course for their own research work in technology areas.

So, I think I will just stop here for a minute before talking about the book let me just point out why this book was chosen. And therefore, I really like to read statement that was made by Kishor, you know towards the beginning of this course. I have this practice

of giving a sort of a sheet with couple of questions that I pose for the students, which includes ideas like expectations from the course.

Their reading habits, their favorite writers their writing habits and many other issues are evoked in the process or discussed in the process; but this is the sort of beginning meeting point for me with the new group. And while I gave this exercise to the present group Kishor wrotes some very interesting things and I am am just reading this paragraph to enable you to see how many of these issues of interface, now have begun to loom large in the consciousness of the students.

I would not read everything that he wrote but this particular paragraph I cannot really resist the temptation of sharing it with you. I pursue writing as a hobby but I have sometimes had difficulty in getting to that creative space. At the end of this course I hope to become a better writer after having understood the creative process, it would also help tremendously with my research at I I T B I am developing a lot of cutting edge new technologies.

The process is very similar to writing one needs to enter a creative space let the mind wonder and come up with creative solutions. This course would definitely help me become a more innovative designer and researcher. So, this is what Kishor had mentioned and I was constantly trying to figure out how to really reach out to Kishor and to every other student, you know who had certain expectation from this course. And so I asked Kishor and Ravikiran who was also equal equally interested in similar ideas to examine the book on their own.

I did not give them too much of a backdrop in terms of the book except to point out to them, that there are these highlights that they could look at in terms of her statement. And let me read that statement for you, you know Brenda laurel says that when we look toward what is known about the nature of interaction.

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Why not turn to those who manage it best, to those from the world of drama of stage of the theatre. And she had gone on to discuss aristotelian plot structure and also the freytags triangle, which was developed by freytag in order to diagrammatically represent the you know highs and lows of the aristotelian plot structure.

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We have shared that earlier with you but this is the other diagram that we ourselves had prepared. In terms of beginning middle ends end, the starting point being an exposition, then rising action, then climax, falling action, resolution. Around the protagonist conflux,

which are selected by great play writes in order to show the, you know tryst of human beings with their own destiny. So, then you know both Kishor and Ravikiran spent a lot of time reading the book talking to me. And we also recognized that actually Laurel is really not using the Aristotelian structure you know in a very limited way.

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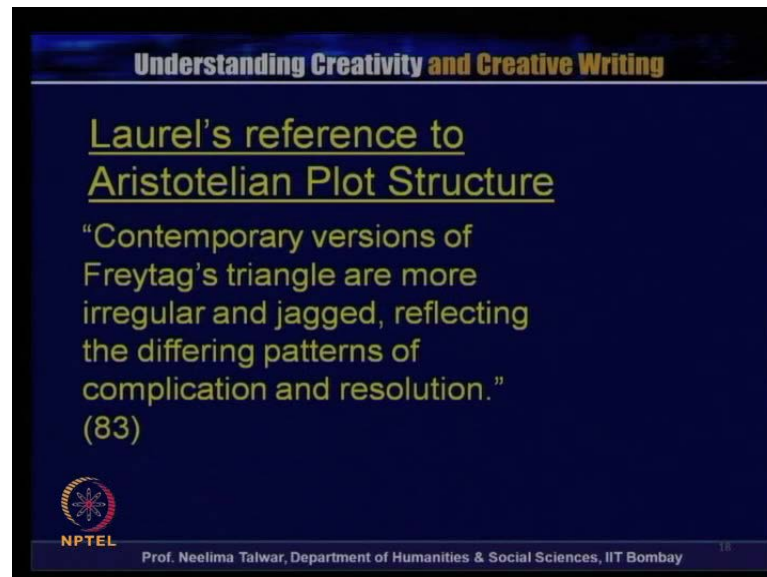
She is aware of the fact that contemporary versions of the freytags triangle are more irregular and jagged reflect reflecting the differing patterns of complication and resolution. But the book was meant for designing video games and their and also to understand at that time this growing medium, the computer as a kind of new medium. So, you know we decided that it is much better if they examine it because they are steeped in new technologies there are also researchers in this technologies.

So, it is best if they give their own critical view of this very famous study. I also felt that you know what perhaps they would realize very soon is that the metaphor or the analogy of the page and the stage, which I had earlier pointed out that in performance it coelasus. But on the computer screen, I think it has a very different feeling, because it is embedded within an operational system.

And also the player or the user or the actor, using the computer is very different from an actor or a writer, in the sense that when you are performing sort of specific piece. Then you are already in an imagined world and that is fairly well worked out. Whereas, each time you engage with the computer I think there is something akin to the breathing sense

of estrangement with which the operator or the actor you know functions. And in dense in that sense there is never a pre given calculated state of mind.

So, I sort of these with thoughts that I had in my mind and has hoping that Kishor and Ravikiran would also touch on these, you will have to decide as to which of these ideas they touched on. But I certainly found that they spent a lot of time trying to understand the book and I also feel that even if let us say you are into video game design. I think a question that you may have to ask despite the proximity of this paradigm design paradigm of interactive drama for computer video games story telling or deretive paradigm in other words.

Whether it has any artistic value or whether it has any critical value, what is it that it is trying to do, I think that may be a question that is worth examining also; and there are many more questions that can be raised. So, now let us listen to Kishor and Ravikiran and see how they examine this book, computer as theatre by Brenda Laurel a critical review by Kishor Nayak and Ravikiran.

Now an introduction, to completely appreciate what Brenda Laurel has to say in her book computer as theatre, one must understand that the book was written and published in 1993 before the age of the internet and ipads. In the book she amalgamates the theory of drama particularly aristotles poetics, organative sciences, communication theory, pshycology and the thoughts of countless other authors and thinkers.

To effectively give a frame work for designing human computer interfaces a little background Brenda Laurel was one of the pioneers in the field of human computer interaction study theatre in her college, and then worked as a game programmer for a few years. Applying her knowledge to theatre to the then up and coming field of video games, after her stint as a game designer she did her P hd in computer based interactive fiction.

The book computers as theatre is a result of the ideas she developed over 20 year period the work was path breaking at that time. Something inferred by the fact that the work has been sited 2198 times as per Google's caller. Many of the ideas that she presented 20 years ago became widely accepted principles holding immense relevance to the internet in mobile era. Although laurels intended audience are game designers and programmers some of our observation hold relevance to anyone involved with design or technology.

The book tends to get quite technical in its analysis of the theory of drama and it is application in software design. In fact a significant promotion of the book is devoted to the definitions and the explanations of fundamental concepts. In simple words the work is like a text book meant for a true seeker and not for the casual reader. The book introduces the reader first to Aristotle in drama theory and all it is nuances such as a need for a plot or a game to have a beginning middle and an end.

The flying wedge model where the object of a play or a game it should narrow down the possibilities to probabilities and then to necessities. She also talked about the importance of the play or any software being a single complete action and above the use of agents in both plays and software. She introduces the concepts of reverses, mimicists and catalysist and the freytags triangle how it could be applied in software design.

The explanations are effectively given, so that even now is readers can easily learn about the basic theory of drama and draw comparisons with software design. Most of the examples sited by laurel are (( )) with most of them having died, most of the games having died out even before many of us were born. This results in a loss of prospective manier time but one can get a feel what laurel is trying to say by looking at modern day games and software's that are not mentioned in the book.

But, then you generally know anybody who has played the games for example, the world of over crash the worlds largest multiplayer. Online game with 10 million subscribed users regularly employ this technique of reversal with expansion expansion backs coming out every 2 years that completely alter the plot and and the experience of the user and retains interest of the user. Now, Laurel also gets across several other interesting thoughts, so the readers as well some very, very interesting things.

For example, the notion of how action must be constrained to result in creative output in both plays and software's. Computer users must be engaged in in the same way of performance engages the audiences attention through directed flow of information instead of intimidating them with loads of data. She also talks about the needs for designers to see the computer as a medium and not as a tool, and for the need to create sensory immersion into the software through multiple modes of interaction such as canasatic, visual and auditory.

She also talks about how about the history of interaction, about interactive place, about interactive movies and how video and computer games came about. And the next and the next part of our discussion is about virtual reality. She also goes on to make many very interesting observation; for example, (( )) quote gestures can be used as a principle or even the only component of language in a human computer activity. This was this was said in 1993 and we see this in action today in our mobiles the technology call swipe where we use just gestures to to to interfere with the mobile.

Many of the things are that she's talked about the relevant non programmers also this part comes more towards the end of the book. They include firstly, the concept of art in technology Laurel brings it out properly through the line, movies did not achieve wide popular success until artist replaced engineers as their primary creator. And this she goes on to says true computers and game design as well.

She highlighted the importance of art in technology much before apple took over the world through the symbiosis of art and technology in it landmark products such as the ipod, iphone, ipad and an itunes. She also talks interestingly about new technologies and management, how management she says is essential. Laurel through the description of the disaster of virtual reality describes how path breaking technology, generates a spurt of new ideas in the first few years.

However, success is achievable achieved only if the technology has been managed effectively, that is creativity expectations cultural issues and deliverables has to be managed effectively through the initial height. 20 years back people had inversion and built virtual reality systems, smart houses etcetera but even now they have not gained (()) acceptance due to their poor management. She sums in the whole concept in one line again, the worst thing that you can do is fire up public expectations when you cannot deliver the product by Christmas.

She also goes on to talk about some intriguing aspects for example, the spiritual aspects and the needs of fashion in technology. Laurels thorough research is seen when she remarks her originally actors in the Greek theatre over the peace of Dionysus who felt that the performance was not for themselves, but but an actor got the performance was not for themselves alone it is an actor have got that they are doing it is beyond themselves.

She further goes on to highlight the importance of fashion in developing technology and how technology itself changes in the consciousness of the people. Brenda Laurel explanation these ideas is remarkable the very same view and passion and technology later went on to me immortalize by Steve Jobs. Now a conclusion the fact that the book was written for an audience for the 90's with technical references from the 80's and the technical nature of the manuscript is the only difficult part of the book.

Laurel clearly saw and defined the future accurately, this work impacted the thought process of several designers post the 90's and impacted how technology is seen now. The irony is that what laurel said in 1993 was made famous by others like Steve Jobs and apple, for the more technology have developed to such an extent that many of the things Laurel talked about are now very initiative intuvative. This further increases the disconnect with young readers; however, the book does justice to the true seekers by establishing the fundamental principles effectively, thank you. I would have to end this session at this point because it deals with the student responses.

Thank you.