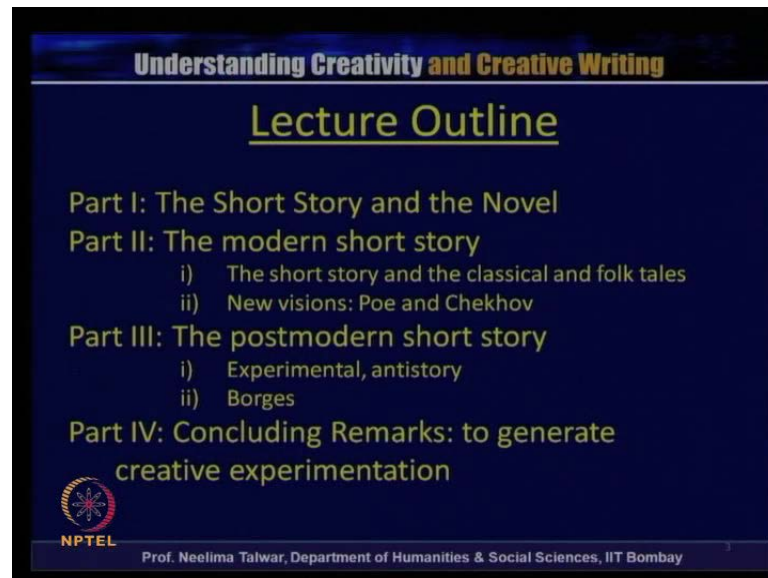


**Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing**  
**Prof. Neelima Talwar**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay**

**Lecture No - 40**  
**Modern Western Short Story**

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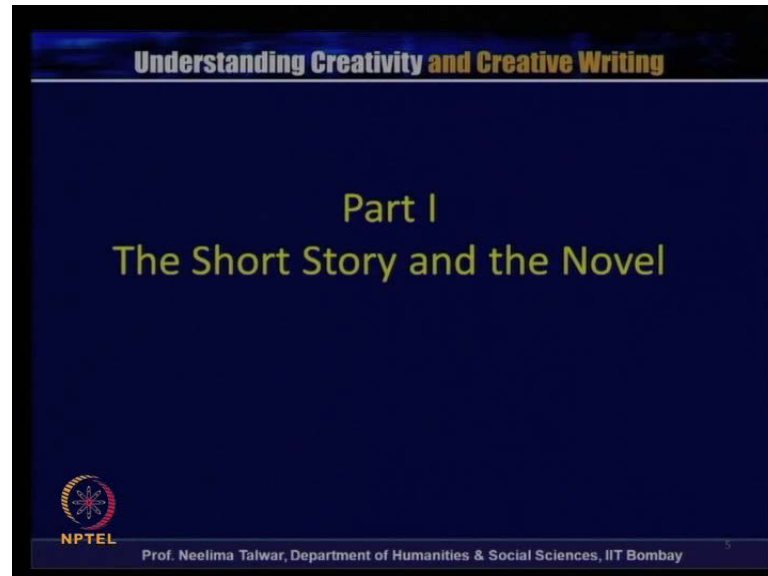


This lecture is titled modern western short story. The lecture is divided into four parts. In the first part, we will talk about the short story and the novel. In the second part titled the modern short story, we will deal with the short story and the classical and folk tales. We will also talk about new visions by examining the work of Poe and Chekhov. Then we move on to the postmodern short story where we would talk about its experimental nature and the notion of anti story, and we look at the work of Borges. Part four deals with our concluding remarks, and we are really committed to this notion of generating creativity, and therefore, the concluding part deals with our desired to support your effort towards creative experimentation.

Now let us start with the first part, we do not really take it for granted that you would like everything that has been chosen by us, indeed you may not like or relate to the sensibility of certain writers, but may suddenly feel a shock of recognition when you read certain other writers. So, you have to allow yourself that kind of pleasure by actually reading lots of writers, and there by discovering your own voice, there your own

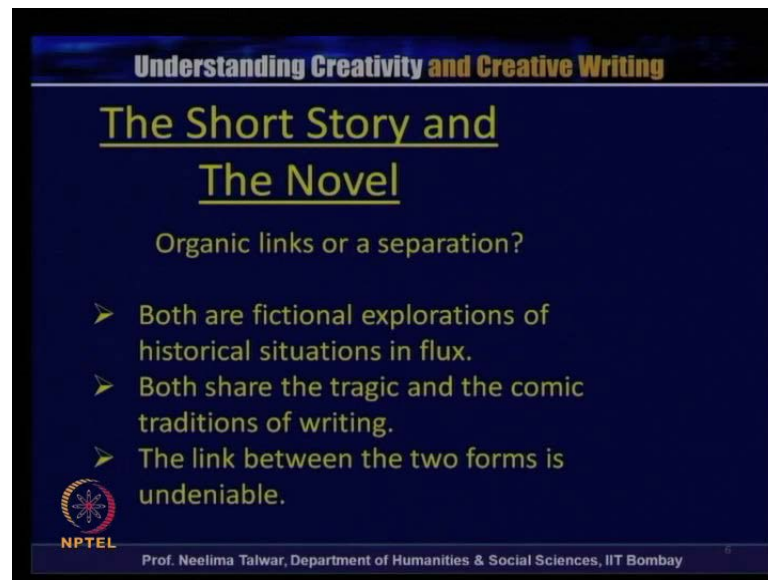
sense of excitement about the content, the theme, the methodologies everything put together.

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Now, let us talk about the short story and the novel. And as have clearly indicated we have place this discursion within the western short story. And therefore, we I would basically assume that the European or the Eurocentric framework would be kept in mind, while talking about these stories, because some of these stories are also translated stories. Wherever they are translated stories, I will you know try and mention it, but you know both translated text as well as original writing in English is part of this rich collection of material that we are going to dip into.

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**Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing**

## The Short Story and The Novel

Organic links or a separation?

- Both are fictional explorations of historical situations in flux.
- Both share the tragic and the comic traditions of writing.
- The link between the two forms is undeniable.

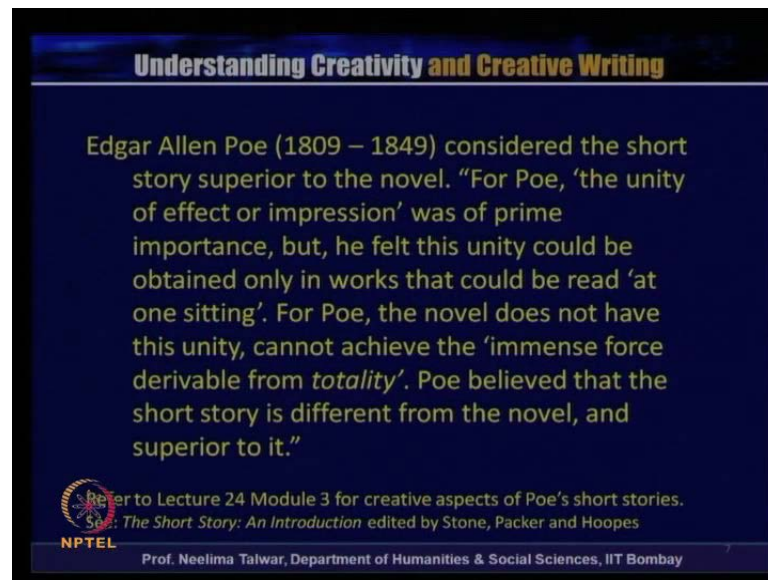
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Now the first question that I want to briefly touch on is the connection between the short story and the novel. You may quite; obviously, the feel that this is hardly something that one needs to talk about because the link seem so organic and so very visible. But at the same time, I feel that because the short story happened later and the novel was such a over powering presents that many of the short story writers have tried to establish the distinctiveness of the short story rather you know in strong terms. So, therefore, I think also, there are very important differences and there let us see how this question has been articulated by any some of the important writers we have chosen.

So, both are of course, fictional explorations of historical situation it flux. Some stating the obvious and both shared the tragic and the comic tradition of writing. Now here I have in mind what Melon Kundara has said else were about the art of fiction and specially with reference to the European novel, he had said that all modern literature this ends from either (( )). Now Clarisa was in the tragic mode and Tristram Shandy as you know very well was a comic novel. Some just trying to suggest that in you know both though these modes are very important for the short story also, just is they are important for the novel form actually they are very important for the for modern drama. And I want go into the lineage, because we already discussed Aristotle and their Aristotelian discourse, you know a kind of impact it has had and also the variations and transformations that have accord in this process.

Now, the links actually between the two forms are undeniable in terms of therefore, not only the tragic and comic mold, but also the possibilities of prose fiction. In terms of you know later on will talk about its stream of consciousness technique or the comic and again the comic is very (( )) and feel and there are so many variation within the comic. But it opened up new ways of articulating experience and meanwhile of course, societies by changing by (( )) was very forceful in talking about the short story and its significance (( )) novel. And I like to place this quotation before you. This is from the very important a book on the short story written by or edited by Stone, Packer and Hoopes, which is full of extremely valuable insights and at really like you to read this book very carefully, but let me place this quotation from this particular collection.

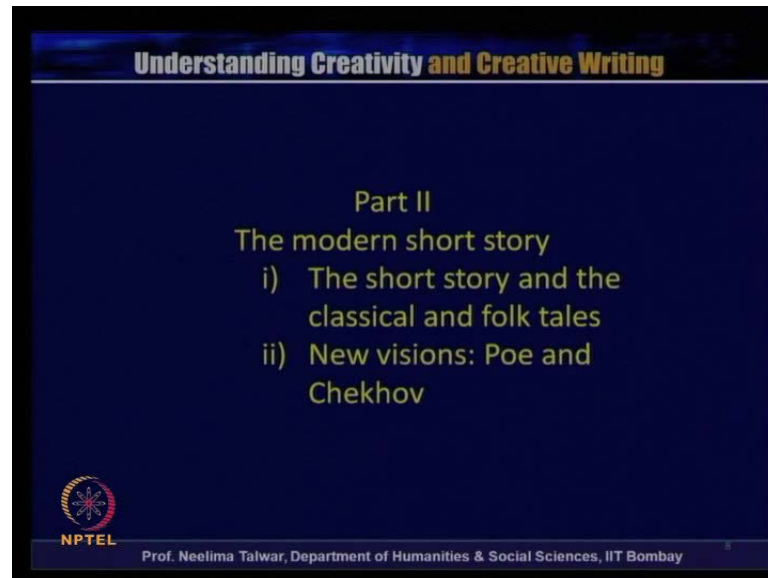
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Edgar Allen Poe considered the short story superior to the novel. For Poe, the unity of effect or impression was of prime importance, but, he felt this unit could be obtained only in works that could be read at one sitting. For Poe, the novel does not have this unity, cannot achieve the immense force derivable from to totality. Poe believed that the short story is different from the novel and superior to it. So, is this totality this sense of it is tremendous power, almost a kind of irresistible force which leads you to create one complete piece and you know helps the reader also to read it at one go. So, this is what he has to say this compression, this intensity and a sense of totality that this particular from offers.

Well I think personally we would just keep this important insight in mind and move on in terms of what the other writers have to say or how they have you know what kind of stories they have created. So far has modern and short stories is concern.

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Let us look at its connection with the classical and folk tales this. This is the second part of lecture and we will also look at Poe his short stories very briefly because we already talked about Poe earlier. And we will also talk about Chekov again very briefly because really because we have really extensively talk about Chekov earlier. To come back to this, you know introduction to the short stories, one of the key statements that was made by the editors, is related to the impulses that make the modern short story a very very close to the primitive, I would like to use the word primoreal instant of story tellers.

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**Links with Classical and Folktales**

➤ "The impulses that make the modern fiction writer are probably, at heart, no different from those of the 'primitive' storyteller. He too would like to be a myth maker, and often is, but his problem is vastly complicated. Early stories were vehicles of assertion. Modern fiction is one of search. Early stories spoke for a whole community, modern fiction is the work of individuals called 'authors'. " (2)

 See: *The Short Story: An Introduction* edited by Stone, Packer and Hoopes

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And at the same time, this is to again quote directly from this statement hear he to and I wonder why there is this persistent he should be he and or she. He too would like to be a mythmaker, that is the modern short story writer would also like to be a mythmaker, and often is, but his problem is vastly complicated. Early stories were vehicles of assertion. Modern fiction is one of the search. I think it is a very valid and extremely valuable viewpoint. Early stories spokes for a whole community, modern fiction is the work of individual called authors.

I can we have talked about some of these overlaps and some of these issues earlier in our discursion of flock tales and classical tales etcetera. You can go back to some of the discussion; however, I think the same idea has been really powerfully expressed by Admon Crusic from the this is the quote from the writers work book were he says we are innocence made of stories. Every culture in every age has told them and our stories from our understanding of our self's and of the world, very very rich and important statement indeed. And therefore, I think what perhaps would be beneficial for us is to use some of the ideas we have already discussed earlier. Instead of a starting of you know with new examples within this frame of reference and I thought you can go back to at could essay where she in desire to seek some understanding of the doubleness of the writers sensibility. She went back to some of the mythic resources and some of the important folk tales. And again I would say that in terms of choice the in a mythic of Narcissus for example, the folk tale the gold children these do establish the theme of doubleness.

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## Mythic Tales: Resonances

See Atwood's choice:  
Doubleness resonates in postmodern as well as modern with hidden roots in earlier archetypes

➤ Mythic and folk tales: Narcissus, *The Gold Children* to establish the theme of doubleness.

For further details, see Lecture 17 of Module 2.

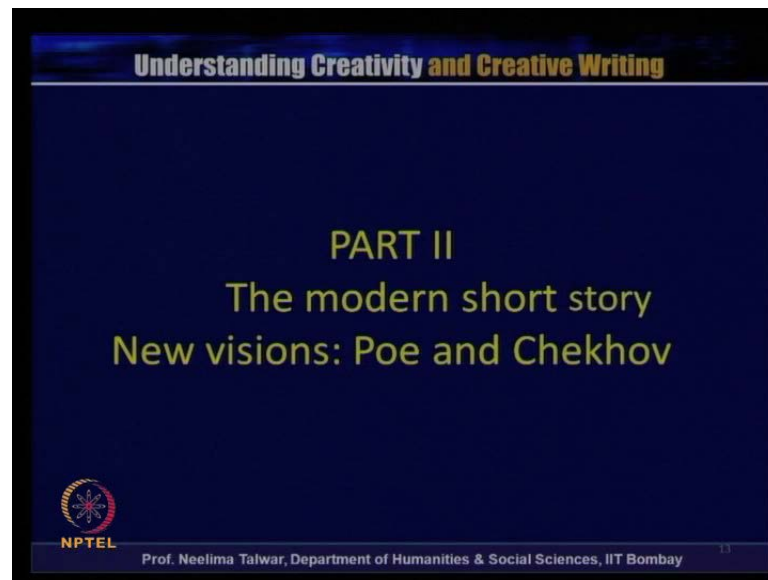
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And what is important for us to understand that whether we are understand to talking about modern or a postmodern sensibility. But somehow the there is a resonance of this mythic sources an also some of the folk a sources, because they keep circulating in our conciseness. And therefore, one can say that there are these hidden roots from the earlier archetypes that seem to again lead to new blenz in the modern and the postmodern. In that sense there is always a sense of continuity although the stories of the past they were modes of a session whereas bourdon to postmodern our stories of search discovery finding one bearings and finding forms that enable the short story writer to express his or her world view in the way it is experienced by the writer.

And now that is a very very radical kind of difference between the two historical faces. In terms of the choices Atwood's has made Vizavi the modern short story very clearly within the notion of the double Doubleness that she was interested in exploring. She is chosen amongst the modernist, she is the modern short story writers Atwood have a chosen Edgar Allen Poe, William Wilson with reference to the double hanker theme and in the terms of the postmodern example she is chosen Borges and Aye. Since I am emphasizing mythic the classical the folk, but I think in terms of the mythic I would like to say that myth's doper wade our consciousness and they are part of our cultural vocabulary.

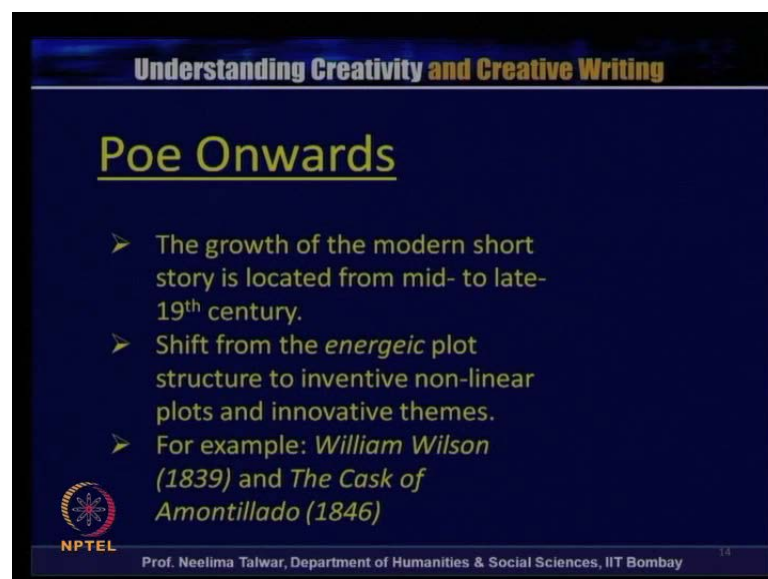


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In the second part, now we will look at the modern short story new visions in terms of Edgar Allan Poe and Chekhov. The growth of the modern short story is located from mid to late nineteenth century.

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And one of the important things that John Gardner has pointed out in this book that we have discussed with you earlier titled 'The Art of Fiction' he had pointed out. In fact, he not only pointed out, but he made some very dramatic claims in this book. He says that the day the cast of Amontillado was published the theory of fiction exploded, because the



story has an end and no beginning and middle and therefore, it challenges the earlier notion of energetic plot and. In fact, the William Wilson also is the another sort of a innovative story within that frame of a reference known in terms of the Cask of Amontillado the reason Garner considers. It is so very as important as a milestone is because this first of all apart from the structural propensity of the tale. The tale is totally totally a focused on the internal monolog almost or interior monolog of the protagonist is a very argotic tale. And it also goes very deep in to the consciousness of that character, it is a very very unfortunate theme which talk about fail friendship. And what I would like to do is to just read the first line and the last line so that you get a sense of that story primarily in terms of fact that there is nothing no structure to it except this kind of outburst of the protagonist.

So, this is how it begins the thousand injuries of our Chénier to I had born as I best could, but when he ventured upon in south I vowed revenge. And finally, you know he instead of does some ware suggest her things by baring this friend alive and covering that particular spot and this is how the story ends I hasn't to make an end of my labor for the half of the century no motel has disturb them. So, one is not suggesting that the themes are you know sublime or exciting in terms of you know something outstanding that has been done by Poe. But Poe was interested in the gothic and he was also interested in many many dark aspects of human consciousness in William Wilson this takes the very very different and somewhat more of the moral a turn.

When he describes William Wilson and also creates his double is also called William Wilson is also a fake identity, but then there is this double identity in the story. And this is how this story starts what say of it what say of conscious grim that specter in my path and these are quotation from sable down a with which the story start and this is how it goes. Let me call myself for the present William Wilson that he goes on to say the order the enthusiasm and the imperiousness of my this position soon rendered me a mark character among my school mate's my name seek alone presume to compete with me. And finally, you know traces this whole you know by graphical in detail by graphical detail the sense of these two coming across each other, all the time one of them follows the evil part the other one keeps censuring him. And finally, these are the last few lines of the story you have concurred and I killed yet hence forward a the also dead death to

the world to haven and hope in me exist and in my death see by this image which is known how utterly dove has murdered.

So, in these you know these are extremely you know ah unpredictable kind of themes and stories although the a doubleness of this story again has a along mythic connection. But Poe is considered as a very very important figure in terms of the composition of the short story about theory of short story also and then I think you could read bit of poe read his theoretical work on the short story and then move on to someone like Chekhov. Now Chekhov wrote in Russian and we are sharing the translations with you. So, this you have to keep in mind because the quality of translations that you read you have to ensure that they are really good. Because I personally have given my choice earlier and you can go back to our discussion of Chekhov in order to understand what I would trying to say about translation of Chekhov in terms of Chekhov again we would try and keep this idea.

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**Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing**

### The Modern Short Story

"The modern writer does not receive his worldview, he discovers it."  
(*The Short Story: An Introduction: 2*)  
So does the reader

- ✓ Re-read Chekhov's *The Chameleon* to discover the taut satire implied in the short story.
- ✓ Read Chekhov's *The Death of a Clerk*: the portrayal of the clerk is "rendered ambiguous" through comic exaggeration.

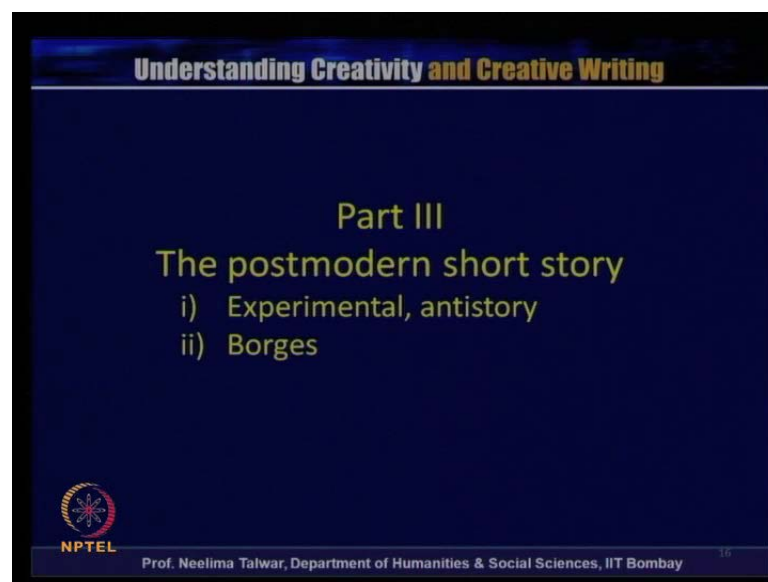
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That the modern writer does not receive his world view he discovers it this is the statement again from this important study that we have been referring to and I extend this idea to suggest that the readers such as person like you or person like me we also discover the meaning within the story. So, they remain very open ended for us and. So, we engage with them and discover the meaning you can really Chekhov that the (( )) to discover the taught satire implied in that short story because again it may seem like just a you know of an event. But gradually you begin to discover the taught structure and the

satire that is implied you can also read other stories of Chekhov our favorite is death of a clerk. Where the clerk is terribly upset after sneezing and you know he feels that his been very implied to the general who are sitting in front of him and the whole story deals with his desire to apologies to the general and the general refusal to except that apology

Now this particular portal of the clerk is rendered ambiguous and I am using this phrase from who has said that the comic renders the modern sense of the comic renders meaning ambiguous and in did in this story the Portrail of the clerk is rendered ambiguous through comic exudation. So, read this story and see how this place out for you after looking this two great figures of modern short story a very briefly I would say.

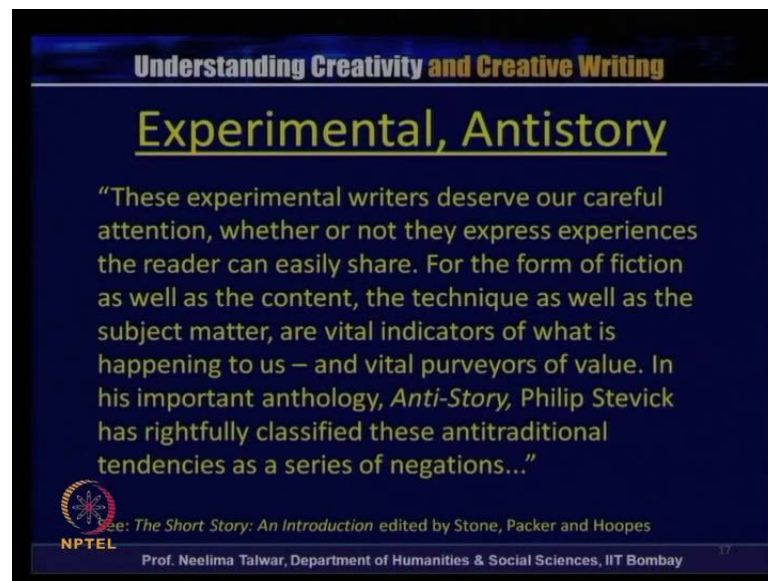
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Let us now move to the postmodern short story which is way experimental in nature and it has been labeled as anti story too. And we will also look at broaches again very briefly the reason we have maintain this kind of brevity is to retain our focus on the actual words that the writers have use and also on the sense that you know you could pick and choose the stories that you like the material. Therefore that we have explode is material that helps you keep your own sense of freshness your own sense of vocation as a writer very independent from available milestone, but without those milestone you wouldn't know the possibilities because many of us get use to certain restrictive way of looking at literary forms.

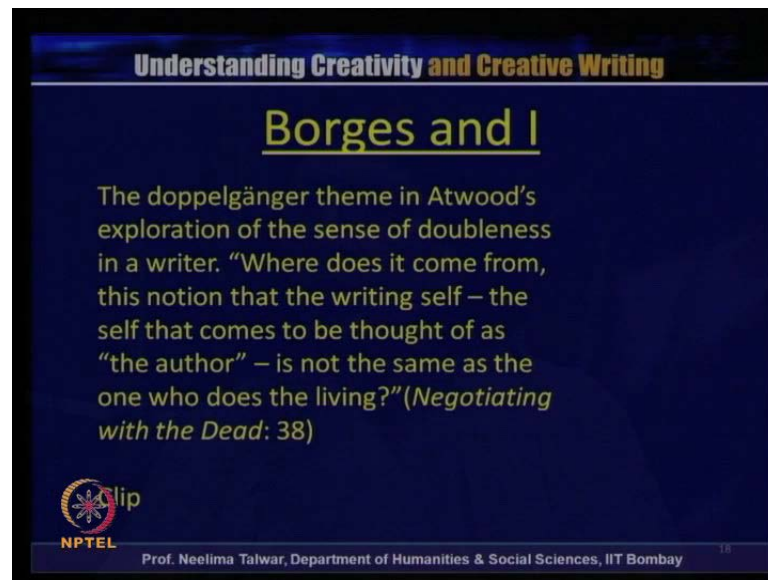
So, therefore, now the examination of the postmodern short story is extremely important and in this anthology by Stonepakeren thouns they have made this statement. And let me share that statement with you these experimental writers deserve are careful attention weather a not they express experiences the reader can easily share for the form of fiction as well as the content the technique as well.

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As the subject matter a vital indicators of what is happening to us and vital per ways of value in his important anthology, Anti-Story, Philip Stevick has rightfully classified these antitraditional tendencies as a series of negations. I want go on to read the fullest of these negations, but I would really encourage you to read this book again in order to see what Stevick was talking about or to go to Stevick book directly. In order to understand his point of view and see the kind of writers he has included in this very very well known and respected collection of experimental short stories. So, we do keep in mind that sometimes the themes the style of writing may be in excess able you know it may seem like you know that it is like you know optical race. But I at the same time it is related to the kind of historical experience the kind value that is associated you know with the kind of form and content that the writer has you know worked out.


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Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing

## Borges and I

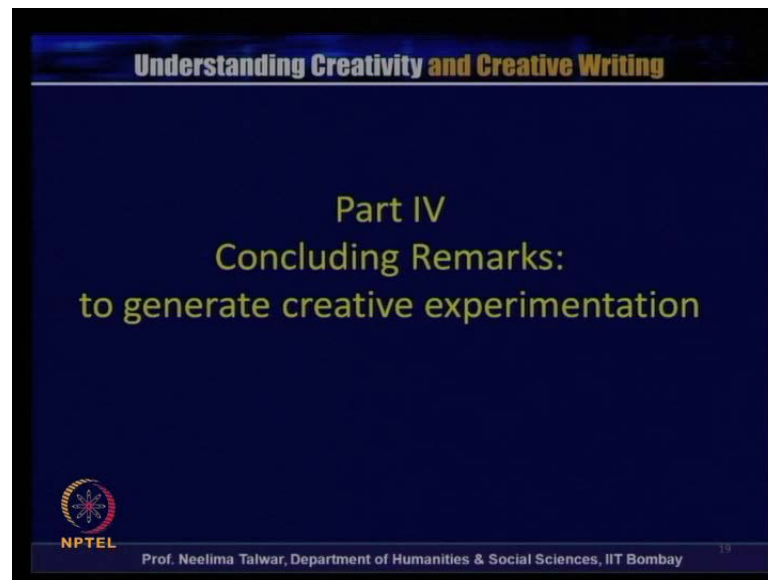
The doppelgänger theme in Atwood's exploration of the sense of doubleness in a writer. "Where does it come from, this notion that the writing self – the self that comes to be thought of as "the author" – is not the same as the one who does the living?" (*Negotiating with the Dead*: 38)

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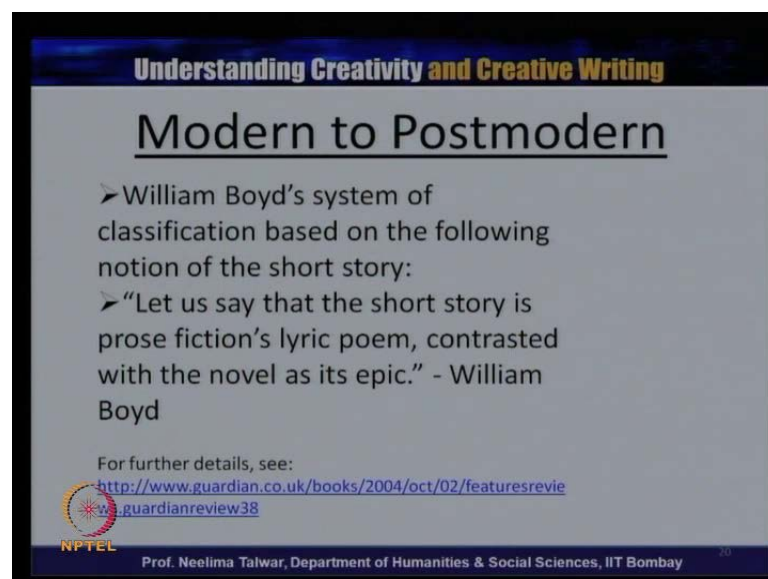
So, in terms of Borges he again is a very tall figure in this field, and we had talked about Borges with reference to Atwoods, you know sense of that doubleness. Let me read this a quotation from Atwood when she you know talked about length talked about double ganger theme she says where does it come from, this notion that the writing self - the self that comes to be thought of as the author - is not the same as the one who does the living? So that was the question that he had posed, and this equivocal sense of the writer is what she felt was absolutely powerfully captured in Borges and I the peace that Borges has written. I would also like to read the first and the last line from that story. This is how it starts. The other one the one called Borges is the one thing happen to I do not know which of us has written this page.

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Let us finally move to concluding remarks. And again has a headset earlier the idea has to generate creative experimentations, we would definitely not recommend the emulation of any particular model, but we would certainly like you to critically examine these short stories in joy them discard them if you. So, desired, but finally, I think after critical analyses is to view undertake this process, you would be in the better position you would be a story or writer. And so we would like to play some more classification that may be helpful.

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Because, this particular essay that we have selected, it appears in the Guardian. And I think William Boyd's had similar instant in terms of promoting experimentation and freshness in writing and it with this period that he wrote this essay. A Boyd's essay is based on the following new notion of the short story. Let me read that the basic statement. He says let us say there the short story is prose fictions lyric poem contrasted with the novel as its epic. Based on this idea and of course related ideas.

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## Seven Types Contd.

Seven types of short stories

- The 'Modernist' story: Influenced by Hemingway's 'revolutionary' contribution to the short story "pared down, laconic, unafraid to repeat the most common adjectives rather than reach for a synonym" and purposeful opacity. E.g. Hemingway's *Hills Like White Elephants*


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He went on to offer seven types of short stories. The modernist story is influenced by Hemingway's what he describes this as a revolutionary contribution to the short story. And he says it is pared down laconic on a free to repeat the most common adjectives rather than reach for synonym and purposeful opacity. And in that is the point perhaps that needs to be noted because it also been said by one of the critic Syphogate who said this, but you know one of the critics. I was reading recently has pointed out that in the short story, it is possible for the writer to maintain the opacity of subtext. And you know, so a Cozol elements do not have to serves at all and at the same time the same you know with holding of the subtext in a novel makes the novel very very tedious. So, this may indeed be a quality that you can examine carefully purpose full opacity.



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**Understanding Creativity and Creative Writing**

## Seven Types Contd.

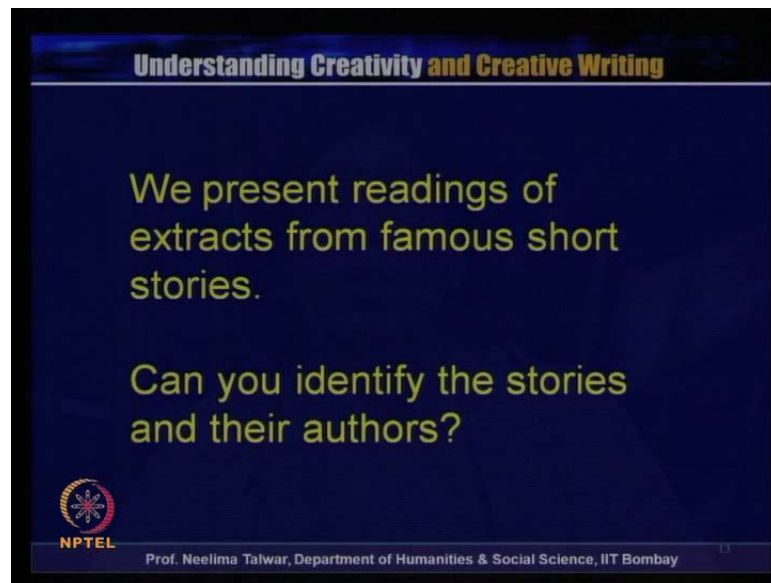
Seven types of short stories

- The poetic/mythic story: "This is the short story-quasi poem." E.g. Hemingway, Dylan Thomas, D. H. Lawrence etc.
- The biographical story: "...deliberately borrowing and replicating the properties of non-fiction: of history, of reportage, of the memoir." E.g. Borges

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The next classification according to him is the poetic mythic story. This is the short story-quasi poem. And as examples again its cotes Hemingway. Hemingway's contribution are again we have to say in which a stories of a Hemingway would feet the bill which of Dylan Thomas which of D H Lawrence, because all of them have written such so extensively. So, again you have to select, but as a writer in this we really help you to understand the variations and the possibility and the you enormous range that is developed in the modern and post modern short story. Then the biographical story another variety which deliberately borrowing and replicating the properties of non-fiction of history of reportage of the memoriam who else, but Borges is the best example of it. You know, he is everything is nothing is an absolutely, marvelous biographical rendering of Shakespeare during that a great short story.

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Finally, we present readings of extracts from famous short stories. Can you identify the stories and their authors? The hills across the valleys of abroad were long and white. On this side, there was no shade and no trace and this station was between two lines of rails in the sun close against the side of the station, there was the warm shadow of the building and a curtain made a strings of (( )). Hung across the open door into the bar to keep out flies. The American and the girl with him sat at a table in the shade outside the building. It was a very hot, and the express from the would come in forty minutes. It is stop at this junction for two minutes, and went on to (( )). What should be drink the girl ask,ed she had taken of her hat on put it on the table. It is pretty, hot the man said let us drink beer.

Those services the man said into the curtain big once. A women ask from the door way. Yes, to big once, the women brought two glasses of bear and two felt pads, she put the felt pads and the beer glass on the table. And looked at the man and the girl, the girl was the looking of at the line of hills, they were white in the sun, an the country was brown and dry. They look like white elephants she said. I have never seen one the man drink is beer, no you would not have.

His soul had approach that region of the dead. He was conscious of, but could not apprehend they wavered and flickering existence. His own identity was faring out into a great impalpable world. The soiled world itself it is the dead had one time reared and

lived it was dissolving and dwindling. Of few light tabs upon the pain made him turn to the window. It had begun to snow again he was sleepily the flicks silver and dark. Falling bleakly against the lamp light, the time at come for him to get out on his journey, westward. Yes, the newspapers were write snow was the general all over violent. It was falling every part of the dark central planed on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the bog of allen and for their westward softly falling in to the dark muteness (( )). It was falling to upon every part of on the hill were Michal floury Labrentit. (( )) freckly refitted (( )) on stones on the his fear is on the little gate on the baron thrones, he souls spoon slowly has he heard the snow falling faintly though the universe and faintly falling like the descent of there last end upon all the living on the dead.

Thank you.