

American Literature & Culture
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Arthur Miller The Dramatist, his life and works (Lecture 28)

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(Professor – student conversation starts)

Professor: Good afternoon, so we will start with Arthur Miller and Introduction to Arthur Miller, American playwright, who according, along with Tennessee Williams, Eugene O'Neill and also, to a lesser extent along with Thornton Wilder and Edward Albee is one of the greatest playwrights, the American playwright of the twentieth century. He was born in 1915 and died quite recently in 2005. Those are the dates, 1917 to 2005.

Now he is, he was born in a Jew family, trading family. His father was a manufacturer of women's hats, Ok. Nowadays you have such kinds of questions also for competitive exams so I thought it's alright to include biographical details like this one. He has or he had an older brother Kermit, and younger sister who is also an actress on theater, acted on stage. And during, because you know the dates, 1917, so when he was 12 years, The Great Depression hit America and the family lost much of its fortunes.

So that was one of the most formative influences on Arthur Miller, The Great Depression and many of his plays deal with this idea or this concept of families, disintegration of family values, family system, family relationships with the decline in family fortunes. this is the

house the family shifted to after, they lived in Upper East Manhattan which belongs to very wealthy people but once they lost their money, they were forced to shift to you know, lesser postal address and that is in Brooklyn. This is Arthur Miller's house in Brooklyn where he lived with his family for a long time and it is also, I mean, Miller also notes in his autobiography, he has written a very classic, a very renowned autobiography called *Time Bends*, *Time Bends* where he observes how the change in his fortunes also resulted in change in the attitude of his relatives, Ok.

For a long time, he worked as a newspaper boy, he would deliver newspapers and also he worked in a warehouse. Ok, you know what is a warehouse. Yeah and all those things have come to find a place in his some of his plays. For example he wrote a play called *A Memory of Two Mondays* which is all, in very extremely autobiographical and which has traces of his own life, when he worked as a young boy in a warehouse as a, and as a newspaper delivery boy, Ok.

He attended University of Michigan, and studied journalism for quite a while and then at University of Michigan, he got interested in writing plays, Ok. So there was creative writing and playwriting workshop, courses there. He attended many of them. And he started writing plays. Most of his plays focused and this is interesting, father-son and brother-brother relationships. So he had a sister. He was very close to his mother. But women hardly ever have an important role, except as mother figure, so maternal figures. So you can apply, and mothers are always idealized. They are the all-sacrificing women. Perhaps this is what he had seen in his own mother who had to shift, who had to undergo tremendous shift in lifestyle after the father lost his income and all.

So may be that has reflected but most often and therefore, and this is what I meant by the Greek influence. Now you have done *Oedipus* and you are familiar with Greek elements, Ok and Greek Dramaturgy. So it's basically the confrontation, the conflict between fathers and sons, and brothers and brothers, Ok and some of his earlier plays were focused on this aspect of human relationships. So he is a playwright of human relationships. But he is also a deeply political playwright. For example, I will soon talk about *The Crucible* and his confrontation with House Un-American Activities Committee, Ok. So he, one of his earliest jobs was to write scripts for radio programs. Radio was big those days. We are talking about those days,

so before television, it was radio and he wrote a number of successful plays for the radio and then you are also aware of the formation or the foundation of the Group Theater.

Are you aware? Have we talked about the Group Theater? Ok, so you have... The Group Theater was a leftist kind of an organization. It was established in the early 30s; three founding fathers, Lee Strasberg, Cheryl Crawford and Harold Clurman. Ok and it was an attempt to create a collective kind of theater. Now what do you understand by theater collective? These kinds of, this is a very socialistic kind of approach to theater where people sit, they write their plays, they do not hope or expect to earn profits from playwriting. The idea is; to certain kind of idea or ideology, the ideologically driven theater and most of them were extreme left in their ideologies at that time. It was.

They wanted to present contemporary plays about, contemporary issues, what was ailing America at that time. Now you see, what was ailing America at that time? They had just gotten out of this First World War and they had been plunged into The Great Depression. People were losing jobs, people were committing suicides. Ok, at the same time, you had lot of cultural shifts and changes happening in American society. So The Group addressed these issues.

So one of the most important playwright of this period, before, so Arthur Miller was just a new entrant, just imagine it was formed in 1931 and he must have been hardly 14 years old at that time, right? So he was not part of the Group Theater but he was immensely affected or influenced by the ideologies of the group, the Theater Collective, the socialist theater. So the members as I was telling you, they held left-wing political views and wanted to create or produce plays that were socially important and relevant and then there is also another important issue or concept here, the introduction of the method.

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Professor: You become, get into the skin of the role. That is the idea. So that is the method.

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Professor: Stanislavski in Russia introduced the concept in America. It found fertile soil in the works like Lee Strasberg who was the most important practitioner of the method. Ok, you know these things. So, again a system of training and rehearsal for actors, and they were asked to base their performance drawing on their inner emotional experiences. So it was extremely, draining for actors. You have to tap inside your own hidden resources in order to or experiences how did you, I mean you are acting, enacting a scene where you, there is, you have to portray a feeling of someone who has just lost a loved one, so you have to , plumb deep into your feelings and think of a situation where you actually lost someone close to you, may be died, Ok, so bring out those kinds of emotions and associate with the role so, people had nervous breakdowns while doing such kinds of, but you know it paid great dividends

because it worked. Ok so you know, some of the earliest practitioners of this style of acting, there is a, how many people can you think of, practitioners of the method acting? Don't name the more recent contemporaries. Let us talk about the 40s and 50s.

Student: Marlyn Brando

Professor: Yeah Marlyn Brando came, during the 50s, came along, yeah but there was an actress called Tallulah Bankhead. She was a great, great theater actress, Tallulah Bankhead. And she did not do very well in cinema because naturally she was so good on stage that she always considered cinema below her dignity and she never paid much attention to building a great cinematic career for herself. But then at a later stage, you had people and remember all these things were happening in New York. So there is always that distinction between LA style and New York style of acting.

So when you think of people who are actually considered great stars, Elizabeth Taylor, Marlyn Munroe, they had nothing to do with the method. It was all glamour, the LA glamour. Ok where as the people who come from the New York school of acting, Ok, who have worked for a while on stage, and the theater, and they had been trained especially, Ok. So they were always considered a cut above. Some of the earlier practitioners at least on, in Hollywood on screen, they were Marlyn Brando as you know. Also Monty Clift, Montgomery Clift, you have already seen A Place in the Sun, right? He was; he came from the same school of acting, method acting and also James Dean.

There were few women who practiced method but later on they were women actors also, especially when the American New Wave started. We are not concerned with that right now. The Group Theater disbanded in the early 40s and after the Second World War, and this is very important, most of the members because they had such a strong leftist tendencies. They were investigated by the House Un-American Activities Committee, Ok so this is the, and that's the point when it started, the late 40s and the early 50s. You remember those dates, the late 40s, the mid 40s onwards, HUAC was at its peak and there were some people who, sort of testified and named the members of the Group Theater. Now what would happen if you name names? What would happen to the person whose name you testify before a committee as dreaded as HUAC and you name them, that yes they are former communists and they hold leftist liberal views, what happens to them?

Student: Some people lost their jobs. They had to move

Professor: They were sort of, blacklisted. Ok, so it was a crime against the nation, yeah to be a leftist, Ok. So it is like...why America was in the throngs of such kind of paranoia? One reason; because of the Cold War, Ok, the Cold War, as, was at its peak and the idea was that anyone who harbors leftist tendencies has to be anti-American. That was the kind of, you know dread or paranoia that was prevalent in America during those times. So, they had their own justification of being, of coming down so heavily on the so called liberals and the leftists.

Because your allegation was that they are practicing anti-national acts and practices. So some prominent people who testified, they were, they were the ones who actually, let's call them, they let down the ideals of what the Group Theater and also the Federal Theater project, things like that stood for. So Elia Kazan, a great film director, Clifford Odets one of the greatest ever playwrights and he was actually, he was the one who was one of the most prominent personalities of the Group Theater. Ok, so Clifford Odets, Elia Kazan, and also Lee J Cobb.

Lee J Cobb was an actor and they all testified and named other members of left wing groups, Ok and I, they saved themselves but they sold out their comrades. So that is why, I am sure what the kind of work Elia Kazan has done. I keep referring to them, him and his work in Film Studies Class so he is the director of *On the Waterfront*, which is again a response to HUAC. Not exactly a response but once he name names, he was also sort of blacklisted by the left group. Ok so there is a blacklist for everyone. Ok so if there are such strong binaries you are against or with them. So he was left blacklisted by his, by the left liberals.

Now *On the Waterfront* is considered a response to the left liberals. It sometimes, he is saying that sometimes it's alright to be a rat; it really does not matter; because you are doing it for the right cause, for the right reason. Clifford Odets, he is the author of, he is the playwright of the one of the greatest leftist plays. It is called *Waiting for Lefty*, *Waiting for Lefty*. He is also the author of *Awake and Sing*; so all very aggressive, very militant plays about left liberal ideas. Very successful, did extremely well for very long time and has written and collaborated on a couple of Hollywood scripts as well.

A much in demand person but again he name names and he died of a broken heart because he was also rejected by his peers. And Lee J Cobb, he was also a prominent actor, on stage particularly. In films, perhaps some of you are familiar with, 12 Angry Men. He is the man, he is the man who stands apart from , you know, at the end there is one man who keeps on, he is very adamant that yes, I am not going to change my stance. He is the man who killed his father, yeah he is the murderer. I am not going to relent, then these 11 men against him. That is Lee J Cobb, a very powerful actor.

Ok, so coming back to Miller, in 1940 he married Mary Slattery and then he wrote one, his first play called The Man Who Had All the Luck. It is based on Henrik Ibsen's The Master Builder. Henrik Ibsen, the Norwegian playwright so this is Miller's early days when he was influenced by European playwrights such as Ibsen. Ibsen was one of his most important early influences, Ok and what kind of plays is Ibsen normally associated with? You know Doll's House. Ok, you know, you should also read the Master Builder and generally speaking he is the writer of social Realism.

So, that's what. So early plays were in that same vein and you know All my Sons, perhaps some of you are familiar with All my Sons, it's a wonderful play about a man, a father who is a factory owner and he sells faulty aircraft parts to, during the War and it results in the death of 27 pilots. But he justifies that if I had not supplied those faulty air parts to the army, then I would have lost billions of, millions of dollars and that would have hurt my family, Ok. But at the end, his son makes him realize that those 27 pilots who lost their lives are also someone's sons so, at the end, the father shoots himself. And he says he realizes that they were all my sons.

Ok so, this is you know, this, this, this is very Greek. It is a tragedy in 3 acts and you see; look at the Grecian element here, a son leading to or causing the death of his father. Ok, father indirectly causing the death of his sons and then, the one son, his biological son causing the death of his father. So it is like a prototype, Greek Tragedy and it also observes the unities of time, place and action and it is very neatly, very tightly structured play in 3 acts. You can apply that Freytag triangle to this play very neatly. Ok.

So All my Sons was tremendous success on Broadway, you know what's Broadway and the play was directed by Elia Kazan. So that's how, those two, Miller was a Jew, Kazan was a Jew and they got along very well very famously and they were friends for a very long time, collaborators, they remained friends till Elia Kazan named the names. Ok and that was the beginning of the end and Elia Kazan, if you are interested, and I keep coming back to him because he has such a central position in American, you know a canon of American stage and also in Hollywood.

So he has written his autobiography called A Life, which is a response to, which offers some kind of justification to why he did what he did. So Miller's autobiography is Time Bends, really, extremely readable work and A Life is of Elia Kazan's which is again a work of literature. So I recommend if you are interested in these things. So this is Kazan and Arthur Miller during the production of All my Sons. Then Miller wrote his most important play Death of a Salesman in 1949. The play won the Pulitzer and it is a story of a salesman. I mean it has been done so many times. It is one of the most produced plays of all times. And why is it so well received?

Ok, because it tells the story, it is a very universal story. It tells the story of an aging salesman who has two sons and their relationships. So it struck a universal chord and you know, father disappointed in his sons and what could be more universal than this theme? A father who is completely disappointed in his sons and sons keep letting him down. That is the idea so Death of a Salesman. It is his metaphorical death and also literal death on screen. Willy Loman is the character here. Are you familiar with the play? Watched it somewhere? You did it?

Student: I know the Dustin Hoffman movie.

Professor: Oh, you know the movie, fine. So you know you are familiar with it. Alright, so this is the early poster of Death of a Salesman on Broadway and this is, you know, the central character. He enters or arrives on the scene carrying two valises; we call briefcases, a heavier version of not as heavy as a suitcase, but something. He is a traveling salesman. What does he sell? What does Willy Loman sell?

Student: He is an insurance agent.

Professor: He is a?

Student: He sells insurance.

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Professor: Oh he dies; he commits suicide because he wants to claim his insurance policy for his

Student: But he is not an insurance agent

Professor: No, yeah we are never told that. Yeah, but what does he sell, we are never told that. So again

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Professor: the other day we were talking about Buñuel, yeah, what's there in the box, we never know and scholars have done endless number of papers on what is there in Willy Loman's valises. We don't know. What does he sell? Ok. It is just like he is your average American dad, Ok who is going for some; you know he is trying to make an honest living. He is going out to work, he comes back Ok but year after year he gets just disappointment from

his son. And he tries; he thinks that he has been doing all the right things so it is also an indictment of Golden American Dream. He feels that he has been doing all the right things all along, Ok, so the play is also known for employing expressionism and expressionistic techniques. We have been talking about expressionism and cinema.

M has lots of, for example Fritz Lang's M has lots of expressionistic devices. Do you remember where? Balloon, you remember balloon and the imagery. What happens to that? It doesn't look like a child's balloon. It has a devilish face, right? In the hands of that person who is a child molester and a child killer it assumes that kind of an image. Ok and you find when Elsie does not return home, and you find her ball, yeah somewhere going, yes it is very strong metaphor or image of evoking her death. Then you have those interplays of lights and shadows. Did you notice that? His shadow looming large on the wall when Elsie is coming out of the school, Ok those are all expressionistic devices, so we have done that, it was introduced in Germany. The movement was introduced in Germany.

You already are familiar with Edward Munch's The Scream painting and in some of the great playwrights associated are Georg Kaiser and Ernst Toller who use this device in their place. And we also know that playwrights employed expressionistic device in order to convey a sense of distortion and angst and paranoia and insanity. We have done The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, Ok so all these were, you know, things to convey. Expressionism was used to convey these attitudes and tendencies. The idea was that, you know, the way to project the way in which subconscious thoughts are subjective in a realities of the character are played out. So how do you show it on stage? Through some devices like through some kind of discordant music or some kind of exaggerated sets and lights and exaggerated performances and make-up, you show that this is an expressionist device in order to project the inner turmoil, the inner exaggeration and primitivism of the characters.

So we know that some of the major American dramatists who are also associated, known as the great practitioners of expressionism on American stage. They are Eugene O'Neill, of course, and one of his most important plays. One is the Hairy Ape and also The Emperor Jones. And then later Tennessee Williams used it to great success, to great effect in A Streetcar Named Desire. That was another play directed by Elia Kazan, the play as well as the film. And then I think I have already referred to Elmer Rice and The Adding Machine where

a human being is just regimented so much that he is reduced to being nothing more than an adding machine.

He is an accountant, and he is a book-keeper and he is called Mr. Zero. So basically what was the purpose of expressionism? To portray the dominant theme of horror over rampant industrialization, urbanization and almost present an apocalyptic vision of life; at one point, Willy Loman, if you remember the film and if you remember the play, he says the grass doesn't grow here anymore. And if you remember the poster that I just showed you, it has grass very prominently foregrounded. What does it show; the grass does not grow here anymore? Willy Loman says the grass does not grow here anymore in his neighborhood. What does it tell you? I think some of you must have come across your grandparents or parents saying, that it used to be a green place, wherever you are residing right now.

Student: Loss of fortunes

Professor: Loss of?

Student: Fortunes

Professor: Not necessarily, literal loss of greenery around. Ok, we are talking about urbanization and excessive development and industrialization. Ok, what do you do when you have to build more buildings and industries? What is the first thing you sacrifice?

Student: Trees

Professor: Yeah, you cut down trees, you cut down, you pluck out grass. You need more land to construct more houses, apartment like houses, Ok. I am not talking about the spacious bungalows, I am talking about the apartments you are, so when you construct, when you need the land for constructing apartments what do you sacrifice, the land and the greenery around it. So the grass doesn't grow any more. That's the idea, so. The play is also seen as, you know desire to hark back at pre-industrialized civilization where life was simpler and more peaceful. Again you have to think of expressionism, *Scream*, that was a howl, a scream against too much of development and industrialization; any questions at this point?

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Professor: Then his next major play was *The Crucible*, published in, or performed in 1953. It's based upon, see this was a response to McCarthy period, Ok but Miller based and did much of his research on the Salem witch trials in 1692 in Massachusetts where women were accused of practicing witchcraft and they were burnt at stake; so why this kind of a story in 1953 then? What was the comparison?

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Student: Basically it was happening in the, they were being accused often falsely,

Professor: Falsely accused, so false accusations baseless, a society

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Professor: gone in sink. That's what Miller tried to show in The Crucible. The hero is John Proctor and his wife, Elizabeth Proctor is accused of practicing witchcraft by their servant Abigail and Abigail, we are told, has passionate feelings towards the master of the house, John Proctor. Ok, what does she want? Why is she accusing the wife? She wants to get rid of the woman? So that's what Miller is trying to say here, that many of these people, they are just trying to get rid of their rivals here, Ok, so anyone who is in power so it's a great play about power structures and power dynamics and equations so you can apply those theories also.

Generally now today seen as a response to McCarthyism and you know the background and since Miller himself was practicing member of the left party and was actively involved in something called the Federal Theater Project which was the offshoot of The Group Theater. See the Group disbanded but there was something like Federal Theater project also. So they were all associate groups where they practiced certain kinds of socially, social issues driven plays and they wrote and discussed things like that.

So, therefore he too was accused of practicing witchcraft, that was communism and he was called before HUAC and he refused to name names, Ok unlike his great friend Elia Kazan and his colleague Clifford Odets. So he refused to name names and then he was threatened with imprisonment and all, and even, however, all that did not really happen. But there were people who were put behind bar and the other day, we were talking about Dashiell Hammett and Lillian Hellman, Dashiell Hammet was really put behind the bars. So this is what he says.

In 2000, he wrote an article for The Guardian, where he says more than a political metaphor, more than moral fate, The Crucible as it developed over more than a year became the awesome experience of the power of the human imagination inflamed the poetry of suggestion and the tragedy of heroic resistance to a society possessed to the point of ruin, so that is the importance of The Crucible.

See recently, I don't know if you remember the incident where President Clinton in 1998, I think was accused of certain things with his intern, Monica Lewinsky, yeah and he was accused of lying under oath and perjury. And then there were cases of, I mean there was talk or discussion of impeachment. It did not really happen but there was discussion of impeachment. Now at that point, Miller again wrote a very powerful article and he wanted to that what, you know sexual indiscretion of this nature. What has that got to do with President's political acumen or political position? Why? And then he says it is like Salem Revisited. So that's the article, it is a very well-written piece. This is Miller before the House Un-American Activities and he was actually questioned and interrogated.

And Crucible has been several times adapted, most famously by Jean-Paul Sartre and it was called some movie, Sartre wrote the screen play. It was called Les Sorcières de Salem, that is

the witches of yeah, Salem and then Miller wrote the screen play for the movie The Crucible starring Daniel Day-Lewis and Winona Ryder. Winona Ryder plays Abigail here. He wrote a Double Bill in 1955, A Memory of Two Mondays which is a very autobiographical, which deals with his life, with his life in the warehouse and he also wrote A View from the Bridge. What's a Double Bill? You know a Double Bill movie? What is it, Dhananjay? You seem to know.

Student: In the (()) Theater you see both, there is a Part A and a Part B. Part B will be a B movie or a

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Student: less budget, low budget movie.

Professor: Right, good.

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Professor: So Memory of Two Mondays was a lower budget play. A View from the Bridge was the main, so it is staged on the same day. One is a shorter and low budget venture, the other one is a more prominent. It is a double bill.

It was also during this time when Marilyn Monroe entered his life and Marilyn was married to Joe DiMaggio, the great baseball superstar and they divorced and they married and she stood by him during the HUAC trial, famously there are beautiful pictures of them, hand in hand together during the trial.

Soon after this marriage, they left for England and where she was shooting for The Prince and the Show Girl, with Laurence Olivier. So if you know the film it is a wonderful film. I think My Week with Marilyn is about that period in Miller and Monroe's life where Miller is really projected very badly, yeah. So this is Marilyn Monroe and Laurence Olivier from The Prince and the Show Girl. Life with Marilyn, they had a short-lived marriage for just 5 years. And she did some of her greatest work during this marriage. So films like Bus Stop, Some Like it Hot, I think we did this clipping when we were doing the popular culture and it has those two men in drag.

You remember? And then he wrote the screenplay for The Misfits. Misfits is also another wonderful movie starring Marilyn and Clark Gable and Montgomery Clift. So this is the cast and crew of The Misfits. And then post, yeah they divorced and he wrote the play called After the Fall which is now considered a classic. You know The Fall, Biblical Fall you are

aware of. Adam is almost seduced by Eve and takes a bite into that apple and so you can look at the title and draw parallels on your own what he meant, what fall he had gone through. It was a very bitter divorce and it is also, the title is also inspired by Camus, Albert Camus. Who is he?

Student: French

Professor: Yeah, French Algerian writer and existentialist philosopher. So he has written a novella called *The Fall*. And it is also inspired, some of the scenes are like, its homage or it is an inspiration from Camus, *The Fall*. So this is the one of the more recent versions of the play and you can see the girl, the actress who is playing the wife and see there is an uncanny resemblance between you know who and the girl. and Miller in the 60s and the 70s he wrote wonderful play called *Incident at Vichy*, very well-received and it is also very popular play. It is about Holocaust. Vichy is in France and Holocaust in French and German occupied, Nazi occupied France. Then he wrote *The Price* which is also a much performed play about his relation with less successful brother Ok and then *The American Clock*, it is about The Depression years, and *The Creation of the World*. It is a satire. It is again about Adam and Eve legend revisited.

Miller as an activist, so he was the President of PEN, the society for Playwrights and Poets, Essayists and Novelists and he took an active part, during the later part of his life, he became actively involved in supporting writers in exile and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and also Salman Rushdie, they owe him a lot for speaking for them. He wrote, I mean he remained active towards the, even till the end of his life and he has written a number of great plays even in the 80s and the 90s. One is much performed play is *Ride Down Mt. Morgan*. This is *Death of a Salesman* with Dustin Hoffman and John Malkovich. And this is poster from *The Crucible*.

So some his last plays, they were *Mr. Peters' Connections* which is again very autobiographical in tone. Now we, the last, some of the last part, the last plays of his life, they are not so well remembered for right or wrong reasons. But now coming back, why we remember, what is the importance of Miller and especially in today's times? So what is so important of Miller that we are still interested in him? So he has written a famous essay and that is available freely online. It is called *Tragedy and the Common Man*, *Tragedy and the Common Man* which is a response to Aristotle's concept of the ideal tragic hero. Now who is an ideal tragic hero? I am sure you know that. Shilpa, who is an ideal tragic hero?

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Student: Something extraordinary about him, so he is worthy of hero's attention, but he also has a fatal flaw that leads to tragedy

Professor: Good.

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Professor: Ok he is a, he is worthy, he is a worthy man but why Miller was interested in that idea or ideal of a tragic hero, because according to Aristotle, he has to be high born, do you remember? So not anyone, you remember the definition, slaves and women are not eligible to apply, need not apply. Ok, they do not qualify. Slaves and women, so there can't be ideal tragic heroine. It has to be a male of a high stature, that is. And there was a fatal flaw. So you look at Hamlet. Shakespeare drew tragedies from this concept of an ideal tragic hero, right? So Hamlet is a prince. What is his flaw? What is Haider's flaw?

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Student: He thinks too much.

Professor: Ok, thinks too much, procrastinates. Ok what is Macbeth's flaw?

Student: Ambitious

Professor: Over ambitious and what is Othello's flaw?

Student: Jealousy

Student: Jealousy

Professor: He is too rash. Ok, sexual jealousy yes but

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Professor: he is opposite of Hamlet who thinks a lot but doesn't act and Othello acts rashly and does not stop to think. Ok, those are the fatal flaws. The Greek word is hamartia, yeah.

So why we are interested in Miller's and his take on ideal tragic hero is that Miller responded to Aristotle in concept that today, in twentieth century, Ok common man is an apt subject to be called an ideal tragic hero. So his heroes are not high born nobles. He says then there are no princes and princesses any more. How do we respond to this theory, this idea? So a common man is as apt a subject of a tragedy as any high born person.

That's why, so all his heroes are, he says they are also ideal tragic heroes. For example, heroes in Tennessee Williams, they have other kinds of problems but they are heroes never the less but he says, his heroes, Miller's heroes especially they may not be high born but otherwise they have all the qualities and characteristics of ideal tragic hero. That is his theory of tragedy. And therefore we credit him for democratization of tragedy. He brought tragedy to the level of the common man. Ok common man is an apt subject; any comment here or question?

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Student: It is similar to what Dreiser did with An American Tragedy, once again the common man is

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Professor: Is, yeah, so see it is good thing that you raised this topic because Dreiser's novel was also turned into a play, adapted for stage, right? The other day we were talking of Brecht and all, so this play, this novel was adapted for stage where the hero, he was given the hero's treatment except the strong materialistic tendencies in him, so yes. He is an apt subject for becoming a hero. This is taken from the play, the stage play, *Finishing the Picture*.

What is his legacy? He is credited with democratization of tragedy. His plays are in accessible language. We call him; we often refer to the Greek influences because the themes of guilt and responsibility are extremely conspicuous in all his plays. And then he has been a formative influence on generation of American plays, particularly David Mamet and his *Glengarry Glen Ross* which is read as a modern day *Death of a Salesman*. Ok, then also Tony Kushner, *Angels in America* and there again you see his concern with Rape of Democracy in America. When was it written? *Angels in America*, so it is also a play of its times, you know, it was written during Reagan's America, Ok so that's what he felt and John Guare, if you read *Six Degrees of Separation* and you look at the way he has handled problem of racism in America, so all these people owe their indebtedness to Arthur Miller. Ok, so we end with that. Thank you very much.

(Professor – student conversation ends)