

Twentieth Century American Drama
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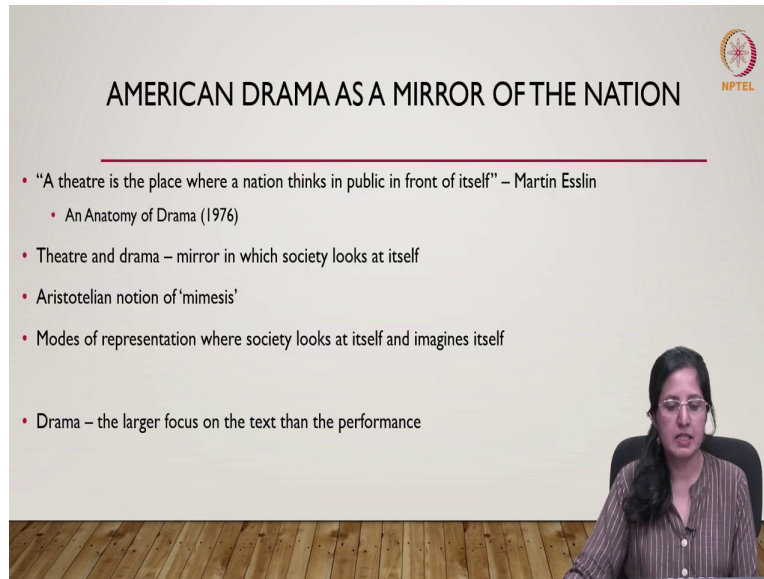
Lecture - 01
Introductory Lecture

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Hello and welcome to today's session of this course, titled Twentieth Century American Drama. We begin by looking at the scope of this genre. We need to understand before we start delving into a particular text, the scope of this genre and how it has been historically configured.

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The slide features the title "AMERICAN DRAMA AS A MIRROR OF THE NATION" at the top center. Below the title is a horizontal line. To the right of the title is the NPTEL logo. The main content consists of a bulleted list of five points. In the bottom right corner, there is a video inset showing a woman with glasses and a striped shirt speaking.

AMERICAN DRAMA AS A MIRROR OF THE NATION

- "A theatre is the place where a nation thinks in public in front of itself" – Martin Esslin
 - An Anatomy of Drama (1976)
- Theatre and drama – mirror in which society looks at itself
- Aristotelian notion of 'mimesis'
- Modes of representation where society looks at itself and imagines itself
- Drama – the larger focus on the text than the performance

There are multiple ways in which we could begin to look at this. I begin by looking at and engaging with the ways in which American drama has been seen as a mirror of the nation. So, this is a genre which has received attention in two ways in terms of the text which has been produced and also in terms of the performances that those texts have entailed.

Particularly in the 20th century its influence has been quite seminal, but its history goes back to the 18th century from the time when the American colonies began to be settled. So, I begin by foregrounding a notion, which Martin Esslin articulated in his 1976 essay, 'Anatomy of Drama,' where he argued that a theater is a place where a nation thinks in public in front of itself.

Particularly, during the time of its writing in the 1970s when Esslin's 'Anatomy of Drama' was published, that was a time when American drama was getting a lot of attention in society.

It was increasingly being seen as a site, where a lot of concerns in the society, a lot of individual concerns, individual traumas which also had to be read in the context of the larger societal concerns; they were forums, they were platforms where such individual concerns and such societal concerns were being simultaneously discussed.

The mirroring quality of drama as performance, drama as text that is something which began to get a lot of attention in the 1970s; and as mentioned its history could be traced back to the earliest

times and we also can draw parallels between the Aristotelian notion of mimesis, which is extremely important when we will be looking at some of the theoretical concerns of drama even in the 20th century.


We also realize that in some very telling ways, Twentieth Century American Drama in a historical sense in terms of its literary critical tradition, has moved away in a number of ways from just a basic understanding of mimesis. It also began to mirror some of the concerns, some of the conditions of the society, and it began to be increasingly seen as a mode of representation, where the society not just looks at itself, but also imagines itself.

It began to work in these twin ways. In this session, we will also see how the American drama was very heavily influenced particularly by the realist techniques and the European drama which was emerging. So, we find that the concern, the responsive nature towards society was always very evident in the making of the Twentieth Century American Drama.

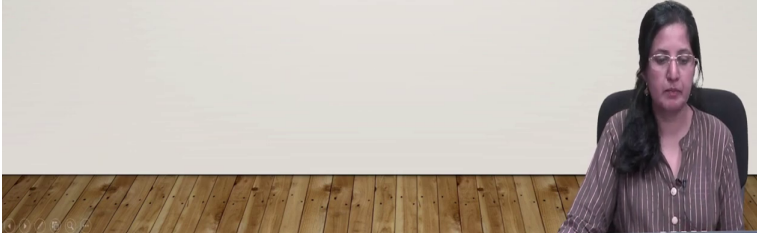
In this course we will be focusing more on the text, because this is a course which is structured around the textual production of drama; but at the same time during the course of our discussion, we will also be looking at how particular performances complemented the textuality of these works, how these performances complemented the ways in which the concerns of the society were articulated.

This twin approach will continue to be seminal in this course throughout; though we will, in terms of the theoretical frameworks, in terms of a close reading, looking primarily at the textual production, primarily as the text of the drama and then in the complementary ways, we will be looking at performance as well.

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- Every play has multiple histories – as a written and acted text.
- Situated in the era of its composition
- Previous plays and performances it evokes
- Larger cultural history in which each play is embedded



When we begin reading each work in that sense, we will also begin to see that each play has multiple histories; each play has a history as a text, there are certain material conditions which influence production of the text. However, it is also an acted text, there is also performance history associated with every text and particularly with Broadway becoming synonymous to the theater culture, the dramatic production.

We find that performance and textual production in at least during certain decades go hand in hand. We will be looking at these histories from these multiple vantage points, paying attention to the literary critical tradition, paying attention to how they become canonical and representative in certain ways and also how in terms of performance they began to interact, how they began to get into dialogue with the audience, with the nation, and with the public itself.

Each play in that sense will be studied in comparison and within the context of the era of its composition; but as mentioned depending on when each plays were staged, because sometimes the plays were staged multiple times even after the decade of its production. It has in that sense a very organic and composite history woven into it.

We will be looking at some of the theoretical frameworks, some of the historiographical frameworks, which would be very useful in understanding that complexity as well. Thus the

previous plays in the performances that it evoked will also have a bearing on the kind of reception that each play had received.

We find that those connections will be particularly visible in some of Arthur Miller's plays that we are looking at and we will also find certain European traditions, certain European techniques and sometimes vestiges of the British dramatical tradition also getting reflected in these works.

The larger cultural history in which each play is embedded will continue to be very important. In fact, as and when we discuss each play individually, we will also begin to realize that apart from the cultural history much of the discussion may not even make sense.

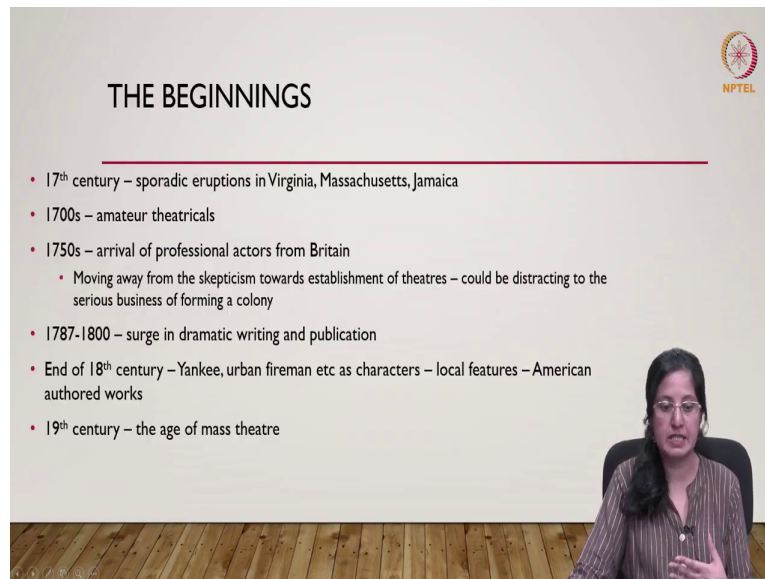
It is embedded in the immediate cultural and political history. Here when we talk about political and cultural history, we also find that what becomes most important is the way in which particular individuals respond to certain dominant ways, in which culture begins to get configured.

It is about individual memories, it is about how each individual responds to particular cultural settings into which their lives and families are also embedded. So, here we find how realism as a technique becomes more important, realism as a technique becomes more preferred than all the other kinds of techniques.

This is why American drama throughout the 20th century remains as that platform, remains as that canvas, where the concerns of the society, the socio-cultural concerns, the political concerns, the individual concerns always get mirrored, replicated in very interesting ways.

It is a combination of realism as well as a certain imaginative way, in which the nation would like to see itself and it is also about certain projected images that are being foregrounded through the medium of drama.

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The slide is titled "THE BEGINNINGS" and features a list of bullet points. In the top right corner, there is a logo for NPTEL. In the bottom right corner, a woman with glasses and a striped shirt is visible, appearing to be the presenter. The background of the slide is a light gray with a wooden floor texture at the bottom.

THE BEGINNINGS

- 17th century – sporadic eruptions in Virginia, Massachusetts, Jamaica
- 1700s – amateur theatricals
- 1750s – arrival of professional actors from Britain
 - Moving away from the skepticism towards establishment of theatres – could be distracting to the serious business of forming a colony
- 1787-1800 – surge in dramatic writing and publication
- End of 18th century – Yankee, urban fireman etc as characters – local features – American authored works
- 19th century – the age of mass theatre

It will be very useful for us to trace the trajectory of the beginning of American drama. Though we are looking centrally at Twentieth Century American Drama; it would be useful to remember that it has a history which dates back to the 17th century. There were sporadic eruptions in Virginia, Massachusetts, and Jamaica; but at the same time there is a lot of resistance in embracing drama as an art form.

We also here need to remember the complicated history through which early America went through; because they had just founded those colonies and there was this ardent desire to move away from anything and almost everything which would culturally or politically signify what is important in the British settings.

Though in the 1700s, there were a lot of amateur theatrical performances, which were also gaining momentum, gaining a lot of popularity; and by 1750s there is a lot of evidence showcasing that the professional actors began to arrive from Britain contributing to this setting; there was an increased skepticism, at the establishment of theatres.

We find that through this 18th century and towards the end of the 18th century, the early American society even before you know it began to be formed as a nation; there was first a resistance and then a systematic and a more deliberate confidence in moving away from this skepticism.

So, one of the things which contributed to the skepticism was a common notion that theatres could be distracting in the serious business; it could come in the way of this serious business of forming a colony.

Because there was a lot of political struggle there was much to be needed in terms of bringing the nation together. So, such forms of entertainment and given that you know a lot of puritanical concerns, there was a lot of skepticism against establishing drama as a dominant entertaining genre. Regardless we find that very gradually drama as an art form, a theatre as an establishment that it finds inroads into American society.

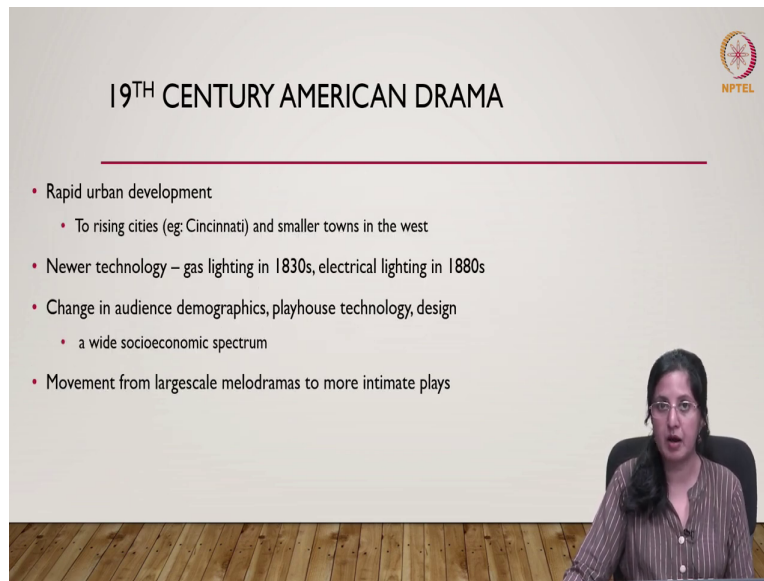
Thus, between 1787 and 1800, this is how the *Oxford Handbook on Early American Theatre* presents it, there was a surge in dramatic writing and publication. Since this does not entirely fall within the scope of this course, we will not be going into the details; but still we will take a cursory look at some of the important trends and some of the important phases of this period.

By the end of the 18th century, it is useful to note that some of the things that it began to assume is a very native character. In these native productions, characters such as Yankee, an urban fireman; such characters with a very native flavor began to emerge.

A lot of local features began to get embedded into these theatrical productions, into these textual productions; they were also legitimately making this genre very American. There was no more skepticism, there was no fear of replicating what is happening in Britain, and then it was increasingly seen as indigenous in some form or the other. We find that during this period, there are a lot of American authored works; therefore legitimizing this genre as very American, as very national.

So, this also made it entirely possible by the 19th century for the emergence of this age of mass theater. What began as skepticism, as a sort of distrust in this medium, became a distraction on the way of founding the colonies; it became a mass movement, it became a mass entertaining enterprise then in the 19th century.

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The slide features the title "19TH CENTURY AMERICAN DRAMA" at the top center, with the NPTEL logo in the top right corner. Below the title is a horizontal red line. A list of five bullet points is presented on the left side of the slide. In the bottom right corner, a woman with glasses and a striped shirt is visible, appearing to be the presenter. The background of the slide is a light gray, and the bottom portion shows a wooden floor.

- Rapid urban development
 - To rising cities (eg: Cincinnati) and smaller towns in the west
- Newer technology – gas lighting in 1830s, electrical lighting in 1880s
- Change in audience demographics, playhouse technology, design
 - a wide socioeconomic spectrum
- Movement from largescale melodramas to more intimate plays

When we look at the 19th century American Drama, we find that it is co-terminus with the rapid urban development, which you know the nation began to witness; it also becomes one of the hallmarks of American culture itself. So, we find that while drawing from this rapid development in a very urban sense, in a very technological sense; we find that American drama draws much from it, but its growth is also rather even in some sense.

We find that, particularly in rising cities like Cincinnati, there are a lot of drama houses which begin to emerge; but drama continues to be popular, and emerges as a popular entertainment medium even in the smaller towns in the west. So, the newer technology which began to emerge along with this rapid urbanization, they began to massively aid the production; they began to massively aid the popularity across different specters of the society.

In the 1830s there are particularly two instances which I would like to foreground here. As in the 1830s the possibility of gas lighting and by 1880s electrical lighting, really changed the dynamics. A play could be staged in different forms, it could be more accessible irrespective of the time of the day. So, all of these techniques which improved the performance, it also had a lot of bearing on the kind of demographics that it began to attract.

There was a significant change in the audience demographic and we find that it was in that sense not just limited to the playhouse technology or the design, it was an overall paradigm shift in the way drama began to emerge and transform as the mass entertainment medium in the 19th century.

This had a huge appeal across the socio economic spectrum and later we find that the way in which this begins to get replicated through the Broadway productions. It was the time when the foundations were being very strongly laid. During this time, the most dominant kind of telling was through melodrama.

Melodrama was always considered as an inferior genre, particularly throughout the 19th century when this was gaining mass momentum. Most American plays like elsewhere used to be predominantly of a melodramatic nature. So, by the end of the 19th century and beginning of the early 20th century, we find that there is a significantly large-scale movement from these melodramas towards a shift towards more intimate plays, more realistic plays.

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The slide features the title "MELODRAMA IN AMERICAN DRAMA" at the top center, with a red horizontal line below it. In the top right corner, there is a circular logo with a sunburst design and the text "NPTEL" underneath. The main content consists of a bulleted list of points. In the bottom right corner, a woman with glasses and a striped shirt is visible, appearing to be the presenter.

MELODRAMA IN AMERICAN DRAMA

- 'melodramatic' – used mostly to deride the excessive sentimental speeches, stereotyped characters, moralistic plot, unrealistic dialogue
- Not worth any serious or historical discussion?
- Before the Civil War – before O'Neil and Albee
- "Melodrama was the mortality of the French Revolution"
- Melodrama as a medium of the masses – no shades of meaning or ambiguities of interpretation
- (Peter Brooks, Melodrama)

Let us take a very brief, very quick look at how melodrama was understood. Melodramatic - used mostly to deride the excessive sentimental speeches, the stereotypical depiction of characters, the presence of a highly moralistic plot; there are no gray areas, it is a very black and white very moralistic plot and there is a lot of unrealistic dialogue.

There could be various reasons for this including the kind of technology which was available, the characters had to you know perform in such unrealistic ways, in order to reach out across the audience; and there are lot of such technical reasons which could be cited for the popularity of such melodramatic forms.

There was a lot of popular opinion too, critical opinion too during that time that these plays were not really worth any serious discussion. However, in the in post 1960s, some attention has been given to this genre as well trying to understand how it, located itself in a certain historical sense; how it was also important to have these sort of melodramatic engagements in the sight of drama during those times.

We are talking about the time before the Civil War, before say Eugene O'Neill and Edward Albee and Arthur Miller and such stalwarts of the 20th century emerged. It was a time much much before the Civil War. One of the historical ways in which we could begin to locate the production of melodrama, particularly in the 19th century is by linking it up with the age of the revolution.

Peter Brooks has this essay, which came out in the late 20th century, titled 'Melodrama'. So, he reads the emergence of melodrama in tandem with the various historical moments, particularly he argues that melodrama was a mortality of the French revolution.


There was a certain kind of a society, a political climate, where a melodrama somehow became the medium of the masses. Because there was a society, who was always already torn between these different revolutionary ordeals and they were not prepared to engage with any shades of meaning or ambiguities of interpretation, so melodrama sort of worked as a mass media.

There are these historical concerns, there are ways in which you know the popularity of melodrama could be read; nevertheless it is important to note that when one is looking at the canonical way in which, the critical way in which American drama has emerged in a literary tradition, solid attention is being given to it only from the early 20th century with playwrights such as Eugene O'Neill.

This is why, we are also beginning to look at this cause by situating Eugene O'Neill and his Emperor Jones is one of the first plays that deserves serious critical attention. Perhaps it would be interesting in some form for you to revisit some of these earlier plays of the 18th and 19th centuries.


In order to understand the kind of sentiments, which were being conveyed, in order to understand the historical location, the cultural location of those plays, before the Civil War, before the 20th century began to happen and such almost universal ways.

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TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN DRAMA

- Arrival of Eugene O'Neil as the central literary event
- Nobel Prize for Literature in 1936
- A repertory of Realist drama
- Heavily influenced by the European drama of the 1880s – Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov
- 1890s onwards – Realism is centrally established in American drama – though gradually
"Americans were slow to accept the new drama" - a fifty-year lag
 - James Herne, Clyde Fitch, Rachel Crothers, Edward Sheldon
- 1920 – O'Neill's *Beyond the Horizon*



When we look at the literary periodization, the historical periodization of American drama, it is actually very interesting. The arrival of Eugene O'Neill as a major playwright, it is considered as a central literary event; it is a central dramatic event. He also quite rightfully went on to win the Nobel Prize for literature in 1936, and these were legitimizing American drama in so many ways.

With Eugene O'Neill and from the turn of the century if one may say; we find that a repertory of realist drama began to be formed. Eugene O'Neill somehow emerges as a central figure of that and perhaps in the next session, we will begin to see how, when we begin to delve deeper into the play.

When we are trying to periodize the early 20th century, we somehow begin from the late 19th century onwards; because that is the time when America, when European drama began to emerge as an almost universal significance. We do know the kind of watershed moments that it created in British history, or how Ibsen's plays were received.

It was a lot of controversy as well; but you know the reception was very volatile and that is something which had a reflection, which had a bearing in the formation of this genre, in the

historical emergence of this genre in America as well. From the 1890s onwards we find that, from these dominating melodramatic plays, there is a trend to move towards realism.

It would be safe in some sense, in the historical sense, in a canonical sense to say that from the 1890s onwards realism begins to get established as the foremost dramatical expression, as the foremost way in which American drama begins to get experimented.

Though there is some kind of a lag that we may find, from the time when realism becomes a huge thing in Europe, to the time when realism gets cemented in the American setting, some say there is a fifty-year lag in this. It is a general saying and Peter Brooks also draws attention to this, that the Americans were slow to accept the new drama.

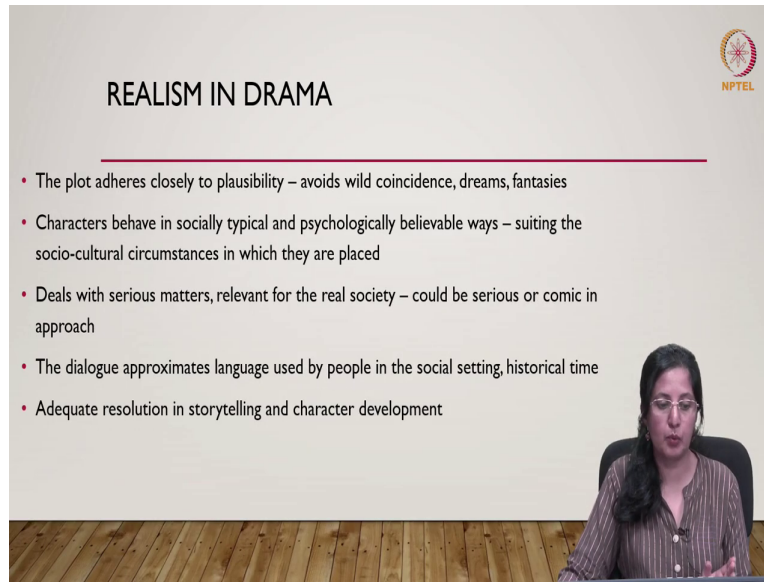
There is this fifty-year lag, which could be attributed to various historical reasons to the initial skepticism, to the way in which the nation, the young nation was responding to the demands of Europe's political, volatile political climate. Nevertheless we find there are a number of writers, a number of playwrights during this period who began with this, who started this process of experimenting with realism.

We have James Herne, Clyde Fitch, Rachel Crothers, and Edward Sheldon; we find that they systematically experiment with the techniques of realism. It may not always be possible to consider some of their works as representative of what American realism or tradition is; nevertheless these steps were very important in laying the foundation towards what began to emerge as a very strong culture of American drama, a very strong culture of American theater particularly from the 1920s onwards.

1920 became this extremely significant decade with Eugene O'Neill's *Beyond the Horizon*, drawing a lot of attention in terms of its realistic techniques, in terms of the way in which it began to resonate with the American audience. We find that this movement from melodrama towards realism has a historical trajectory, has a sociocultural trajectory and in terms of its experimentation, in terms of its translation as in drama, in the theatrical techniques; we find that American drama quite promptly catches up with the European tradition.

This is why Eugene O’Neill who began to write in the 1920s, is the recipient of the Nobel Prize by 1936; that is a kind of prolific production, not just from Eugene O’Neill, but from the number of other dramatists that America began to witness.

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The slide features the title "REALISM IN DRAMA" at the top center. Below the title is a horizontal line. To the right of the title is the NPTEL logo. The main content consists of five bullet points:

- The plot adheres closely to plausibility – avoids wild coincidence, dreams, fantasies
- Characters behave in socially typical and psychologically believable ways – suiting the socio-cultural circumstances in which they are placed
- Deals with serious matters, relevant for the real society – could be serious or comic in approach
- The dialogue approximates language used by people in the social setting, historical time
- Adequate resolution in storytelling and character development

In the bottom right corner, there is a small video inset showing a woman with glasses and a striped shirt speaking.

This movement from melodrama to realism, it began to reflect, it began to get showcased with certain particular techniques. When we are talking about realism in drama, we have in mind a certain set of basic tenets. We will be looking at the particular ways in which this technique gets reflected in the telling of a story, when we are looking at or doing a close reading of the drama. This is just to give a sense of what realism entails.

In a realistic depiction, the plot adheres very closely to what is plausible. It also means that the wild coincidences, the dreams or sequences of fantasy, soliloquy are all removed entirely from the realist drama. There is a lot of experimentation, but it also sticks by and large to what is feasible, what is very realistic in day to day life.

The characters also are made to believe, are made to behave in ways which are socially acceptable in the sense that not entirely in a moralistic sense, but in a way that you know the character has to fit the milieu in very specific ways.

There are certain typical, psychological and social ways, the believable ways in which the characters are expected to respond. This also suits the social cultural circumstances into which the plot is happening, and the characters are placed.

There is a certain way in which imagination is at work, but it also stays rooted in the lived experiences; which is why the characters memory surfaces, because most of these plays at so many different levels, are also memory plays as people begin to see. So, we find that the individual character's memory, which is heavily influenced by his setting that has to be relatable, has to be in complementary terms with what the audience is witnessing it as well.

Regardless of whether it is a comedy or a you know or a very serious play, the theme revolves mostly around very serious matters; this is something that we will witness in an almost tragic play, such as Arthur Miller's *Death of Salesman* or one of the comedies that we will be looking at a later point.

So, we will find that regardless of the content, and seriousness or the comical way through which the plot is represented; the theme by and large remains very central, very crucial to the contemporary socio-cultural settings. In that sense most of these plays we find that, the themes stay very relevant to a larger society and hence quite relatable as well.

The dialogue delivery also undergoes a radical change in this shift from melodrama to realism. It appropriates the dialogue more or less, approximates the language used by real people based on their lived experience in particular social settings, particular historical time. There is a lot of plausibility, there is a lot of believability in this depiction.

We also find that in storytelling and in character development and in the movement of the plot, there is a lot of believability and sometimes the slowness of this realistic telling, could also be attributed to that. This is something that we will see more tellingly in one of the earliest plays that we will be looking at - Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*; whether there is a certain slowness with which action moves and that also resonates very well with the realist techniques, with these resonates very well the closeness to lived reality, lived experiences.

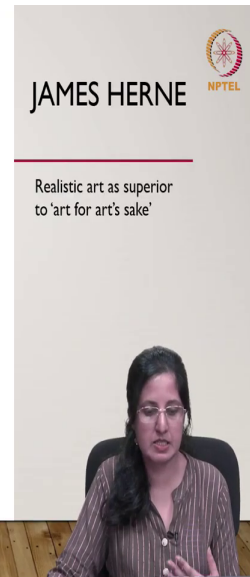
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"Art for Art's Sake" seems to me to concern itself principally with delicacy of touch, with skill. It is aesthetic. It emphasizes beauty. It aims to be attractive. It must always be beautiful. It must contain no distasteful quality. It never offends. It is highbred, so to speak. It holds that truth is ugly, or at least is not always beautiful. The compensation of the artist is the joy of having produced it.

"Art for Truth's Sake," on the other hand, emphasizes humanity. It is not sufficient that the subject be attractive or beautiful, or that it does not offend. It must first of all express some *large* truth. That is to say, it must always be representative. Truth is not always beautiful, but in art for truth's sake it is indispensable.

Art for art's sake may be likened to the exquisite decoration of some noble building; while art for truth's sake might be the building itself.

Art for truth's sake is serious. Its highest purpose has ever been to perpetuate the life of its time. . . . But in expressing a truth through art, it should be borne in mind that selection is an important principle. If a disagreeable truth is not also essential, it should not be used in art. . . . I hold it to be the duty of the true artist to state his truth as subtly as may be. In other words, if he has a truth to manifest and he can present it without giving offense and still retain its power, he should so present it; but if he must choose between giving offense and receding from his position, he should stand by his principle and state his truth fearlessly. . . . I stand for art for truth's sake because it perpetuates the everyday life of its time, because it develops the latent beauty of the so-called commonplaces of life, because it dignifies labor and reveals the divinity of the common man. (Herne 1897, 361-70)



At this point, I also want to draw attention to one of the essays by James Herne, which was produced in 1897 when realism began to get a lot of credibility in the American dramatic critical tradition. This is realism as an art, realistic art began to get presented as in contrast to art for art's sake movement.

In response to the art for art's sake tendency, we find that art for art's sake gets replaced by art for truth's sake as we can see over here. In this brief excerpt, James Herne tries to give a rationale for coming up with the realist experimental techniques by defending it in the name of truth. Art and truth here emerge as dichotomous characters, not necessarily in a very binary way; but we do find this movement from art for art's sake towards art for truth's sake.

The historical conditions, the political conditions also demand this sort of a movement as we will begin to see. So, if we may quickly read through this excerpt, Art for art's sake seems to concern itself primarily with the delicacy of touch with skill, it is aesthetic, it emphasizes beauty.

It begins by telling us what the art for art's sake movement entailed, the kind of aesthetics that it had produced, it aims to be attractive, it must always be beautiful; it must contain no distasteful quality, it never offends, it is highbred, so to speak it holds that truth is ugly, or at least is not always beautiful. The compensation of the artist is the joy of having produced it.

Here in the art for art's sake movement and in the many aesthetic products of it; we find that imagination is used as a filter through which reality is you know reality is made to go through. Reality is getting reproduced, reality always gets reproduced as something which is more palatable.

Even when it is not entirely fantastical, we find that the element of beauty; this desire to make it look aesthetically presentable was dominating in the art for art's sake period. With art for truth's sake, the way James Herne puts it, on the other hand emphasizes humanity.

We find that this is also a movement towards presenting the lives of ordinary people; it is not sufficient that your subject be attractive or beautiful or that it does not offend, it must first of all express some large truth, that is to say must always be representative.

This is something that we begin to notice; of course Herne's essay, is not entirely saying something original, but it becomes very important in the context of the American drama. We find that this movement, this trend, had already begun to take momentum in the European setting, which with Ibsen's plays we know the kind of controversies that it had, the kind of responses that those plays had received across Europe and in Britain.

That is to say it must always be representative; truth is not always beautiful, but an art for truth's sake is indispensable. Here the representative nature becomes almost indispensable. This is why, the kind of effect, the socio political effect, that the Twentieth Century American Drama began to have, all the audience also was at an unprecedented level.

Art for art's sake may be likened to the exquisite decoration of some noble building; while art for truth sake might be the building itself. So, there is a rawness to it, which is why this reliance on individual memory, becomes hugely important in our discussion; as and when we are going through individual plays, we will see this in more clear terms as well.

It is not about an ornamented truth, it is not about, decorating the truth; it is about the raw building itself, it is about the raw structure itself. Art for truth sake is serious, its highest purpose has ever been to perpetuate the life of its time. In expressing the truth through art, it should be borne in mind that selection is an important principle.

If a disagreeable truth is also not essential, it should not be used in art. There are certain things which of course, you know began to undergo a lot of change as and when the realist techniques; when the realist techniques you know this is something that we will come back to talk about.

The realist techniques were also combined with the tenets of expressionism. And to continue reading here, if a disagreeable truth is not also essential, it should not be used in art. I hold it to be the duty of the true artist to state his truth as subtly as maybe; in other words if he has a truth to manifest and he has presented it without giving offense and still retains its power, he should present it.

It is not entirely devoid of the aesthetic quality, which is why it becomes very important to deal with realism as a technique; because it is not just about just presenting whatever is there without mediating it, without mediating it through the different techniques of art.

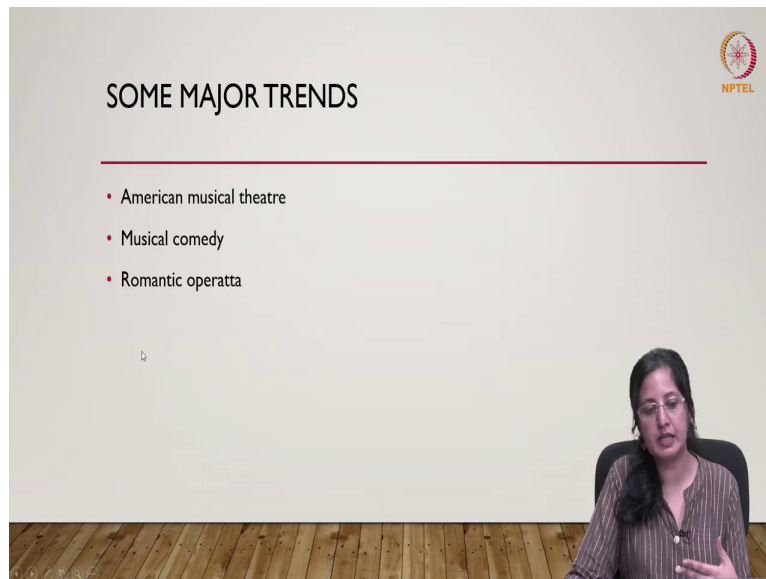
This is why, even if we just stick to the analogy of the decoration of the building, the making of a building also requires technique, it also requires a systematic effort, it is not just like putting random bricks together; here Herne also gets into this discussion by trying to foreground that, it is not entirely devoid of techniques, it is not entirely devoid of the aesthetic requirements.

However, if he must choose between giving offence and receding from his possession, he should stand by his principle and state his truth fearlessly. There is also an added element of commitment or the artistic commitment of the society, that is something which is the added flavor, that this art for truth's sake brings in vis-a-vis art for art's sake.

I stand for art for truth's sake because it perpetuates the everyday life of its time, because it develops a latent beauty of the so-called common places of life, because it dignifies labor and reveals the divinity of the common man. It is largely about the everydayness, it is about the lived experiences, it is about how human beings experience life, experiences different emotions on a day to day basis.

This is the human quality; it is the daily representative quality that a Twentieth Century American Drama also embarked from its inception, the realist technique.

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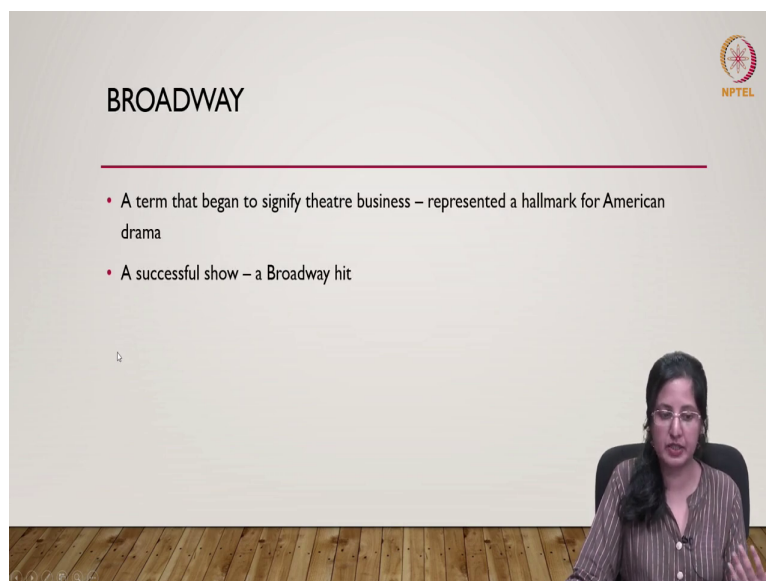
The slide features the title "SOME MAJOR TRENDS" at the top left, followed by a horizontal red line. Below the line is a bulleted list of three items: "American musical theatre", "Musical comedy", and "Romantic operatta". In the top right corner, there is a circular logo with a red and white design and the text "NPTEL" underneath. In the bottom right corner, there is a video inset showing a woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a striped shirt, speaking and gesturing with her hands. The background of the slide is a light beige color with a wooden floor texture at the bottom.

SOME MAJOR TRENDS

- American musical theatre
- Musical comedy
- Romantic operatta

So, some of you know this is something, this is a quality, this is a trend which began to get replicated in various other forms too; this is something you know perhaps in between we will come back to have a brief discussion on. It also began to get replicated in the musical theater, musical comedy, romantic operetta, where you know some of the other complementary genres also flourished during this time.

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The slide features the title "BROADWAY" at the top left, followed by a horizontal red line. Below the line is a bulleted list of two items: "A term that began to signify theatre business – represented a hallmark for American drama" and "A successful show – a Broadway hit". In the top right corner, there is a circular logo with a red and white design and the text "NPTEL" underneath. In the bottom right corner, there is a video inset showing the same woman from the previous slide, speaking and gesturing with her hands. The background of the slide is a light beige color with a wooden floor texture at the bottom.

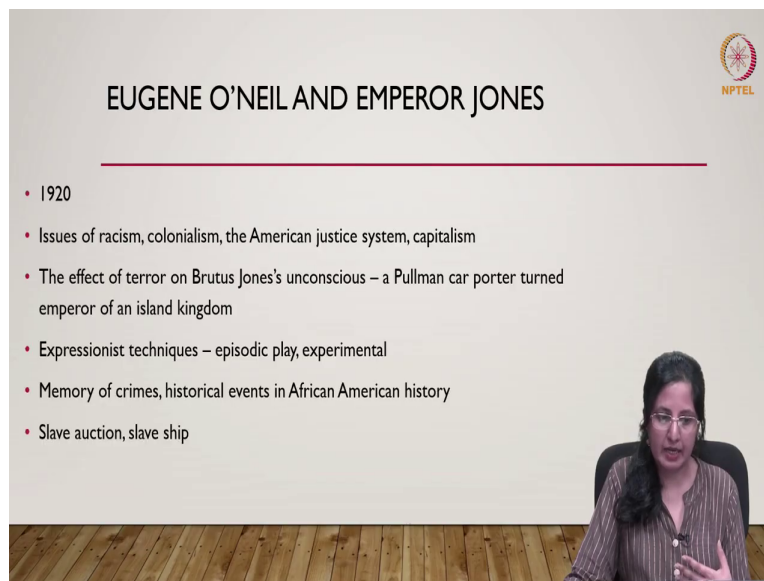
BROADWAY

- A term that began to signify theatre business – represented a hallmark for American drama
- A successful show – a Broadway hit

And Broadway is a term that we will be using a lot throughout this course and we will of course have a more focused discussion on this; Broadway began to emerge as a term that signified theater business itself. And it was as a hallmark of American drama, it is a hallmark for American drama.

So, a successful show, has become very synonymous with a Broadway hit. This is the kind of vocabulary that Twentieth Century American Drama began to inhabit as well.

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The slide features the title "EUGENE O'NEIL AND EMPEROR JONES" at the top center, with a red horizontal line below it. In the top right corner, there is a circular logo with a red and white design and the text "NPTEL" underneath. The main content is a bulleted list of topics:

- 1920
- Issues of racism, colonialism, the American justice system, capitalism
- The effect of terror on Brutus Jones's unconscious – a Pullman car porter turned emperor of an island kingdom
- Expressionist techniques – episodic play, experimental
- Memory of crimes, historical events in African American history
- Slave auction, slave ship

In the bottom right corner of the slide, there is a video inset showing a woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a striped shirt, speaking and gesturing with her hands.

Just as when we are about to wrap up the discussion for today; let me also set the stage for beginning *Emperor Jones*, Eugene O'Neill's very iconic play.

It is a 1920 play, which had very unconventionally brought together the discussion of number of controversial issues, number of politically relevant issues, such as racism, colonialism, the American justice system, and of course, capitalism; which continues to be critiqued, which is embraced as well as critiqued in very simultaneous ways throughout the 20th century history of American drama.

So, some of you who have started reading the play, would know that, this captures the effect of terror on Brutus Jones's unconscious, who is also the protagonist of this play. Brutus Jones was originally a Pullman car porter who turned into the emperor of an island kingdom; the details of which we will be examining, when we are reading the play closely.

We find that this is a realist play, which uses a lot of expressionist techniques. It is episodic in nature, it is experimental and very importantly it uses memory in very central ways. We find that there is a memory that operates in two different ways; there is this individual memory of Brutus Jones, you know who has this memory of crimes through which the plot moves forward too. It is a retelling - an individual recollected telling.

We also find that there is a memory of the historical events in African American history. It is a memory which is operating in twin ways; we will see there is the individual memory, there is also a collective memory of the nation which is at work taking forward the plot and also showing directions in which the individual memory and the collective memory, and the nation's memory begin to merge.

In that sense, complementing some of the individual recollections of Brutus Jones; we find that the nation's memory also corroborates certain events, such as the slave auction - the episode in the slave ship. We do find that you know this claim for Jones by Eugene O'Neill the 1920, play could be located as a perfect way to begin this discussion on American drama. It begins by tackling certain very unconventional subjects.

It also begins by you know engaging with art in a truthful ways, by staying very true to what James Herne had foregrounded, it is art for truth's sake by engaging with certain offensive aspects in memory, certain offensive aspects in the nation's memory in African American history and using art, using the form of drama as an engaging medium to deal with it. So, with this we bring this discussion to a close and I will look forward to meeting you in the next session.

Thank you for your time.