

Greek Tragedy – Katie Gilbertson’s Lecture

History of Theatre

- Dithyramb – sung for Dionysus
 - religious to secular transformation
- Thespis: stepped out of the chorus to be an actor, where the term thespian came from
 - people were forbidden from playing the parts of gods
- City of Dionysia
 - Festivals with trilogies and Satire plays to mock the plays just performed
- Aeschylus
 - added second actor, created more conflict
 - Thespis responded directly to the chorus
- Sophocles
 - added third actor, wrote 90-120 plays, 7 of which have survived
 - never won less than 2nd place
- Euripides
 - shifted focus from gods to humans, moralist tragedies

Aesthetics of Greek Theatre

- masks used to imply status
- males only
- deus ex machine
- chorus
- amphitheatre

Medea

- gender
- passion vs. reason
- deus ex machine
 - CLIP: Pretty Woman – Richard Gere rescues Julia Roberts

Purpose of Chorus

- a character in the play
- establishes ethical or social framework
- serves as ideal audience member
- helps to set overall mood
- adds movement, spectacle, song, dance
- provides rhythm
 - CLIP: Mighty Aphrodite

Separation of Comedy and Tragedy

-there was not a combination of tragedy and comedy in one play until Euripides

Characteristics of Greek Tragedy

-doesn't always end with the death of the protagonist – main character is the one left to suffer

All Greek plays follow three unities

-time (takes place in one day)

-place (one location)

-action (one story line)

Chorus is present

Tragedy has a purpose – to provide a catharsis

-Hubris or Pity? – Katie says Sophocles was more interested in Pity than Hubris

Aristotle's Six Elements

-plot

-character

-thought (rhetoric)

-diction (language)

-music (sound) – chorus

-spectacle – comes from the drama, not just the visual

-the story of Oedipus Rex

“and now the play starts” – whew

-in Greek theatre, violence happens off stage, Oedipus comes back to the stage with eyes gouged out

Aristotle's Definition of Tragedy

-a play featuring a chain of events:

1. a reversal / peripeteia

-everything Oedipus tries to do results in the opposite intention

-from great to bad, the fall from great heights

2. a recognition / anagnorisis

-discovering errors

3. a change of fortune / catastrophe

-this leads to a scene of suffering

Freytag's Triangle - ?

Themes of Oedipus – To Know or Not to Know?

- pursuit of knowledge
- fate

Dramatic Irony

-dramatic irony is a relationship of contrast between a character's limited understanding of his or her situation in some particular moment of the unfolding action and what the audience, at the same instant, understands the character's situation to actually be. It is thus the result of a special sort of discrepancy in perspective, and hence is "moment-bound."

- Creon comes back from oracle and says, "All's well that ends well."
- I will search for Laius's murder just as though he were my own father
- Tiresias tells Oedipus that he's at fault, Oedipus goes crazy and insults Tiresias for being blind when it's clearly Oedipus who can't see what's happening (and ultimately Oedipus loses his eyes)

- prologue, line 63, page – the irony is that Oedipus is making a comforting speech to the people of Thebes, and it's his fault
- because Oedipus rid the city of the sphinx, he is confident he can get rid of the plague

- scene 1, line 27 – "Thus I associate myself with the oracle."
- wishes wretchedness upon himself, curses himself essentially
- scene 1, line 48 and 49 – "I say I take a son's heart...just as though I were a son."
 - foreshadowing and irony

Irony and Metaphor in Oedipus Rex

- Apollonian principles – know thyself and nothing excessively

- light vs. darkness
- sight vs. blindness

Intertextual Comparison: Memento

- Leonard is investigating himself
- Thematic Obsession – is it always best to learn the truth? Anne Frank
- in Oedipus Rex, the only one who answers affirmatively is Oedipus himself and his is brutally punished for it. All the other characters advocate ignorance.
- Memento's modern answer is amoral; Leonard retreats into ignorance and is celebrated
- Leonard refuses to remember the truth because without the truth, he has a sense of purpose

- Tragedies undo great violence through revealing its barbarism
- the solution to violence is in law and order as established through civilization

Aristotle – Poetics: Comedy and Epic and Tragedy

- Comedy – imitating poor in ludicrous ways
 - not taken seriously
- Epic and Tragedy
 - epics not confined to single day while tragedy seeks to be one day or less
 - tragedy possesses epic elements
 - epics don't possess all tragedy elements
- Tragedy
 - imitation of action with serious implications
 - pity and fear
 - uses attractive language
 - six constituent elements
 1. plot
 2. characters
 3. verbal expressions
 4. thought
 5. visual adornment
 6. song composition
 - manner of imitation: visual adornment
 - things imitated: plot, characters, thought
 - structure of incidents most important
 - tragedy requires plot – not character
 - endless dialog is not action

Principles of tragic plot

- “whole” – beginning, middle, end
- plot is dynamic, all contributing to unified action
- that which is unnecessary to the plot should be removed
- poets speak on what can happen while historians speak on what has happened
- poetry more philosophical and serious than history
- poetry is universal, history deals in particulars

Simple versus Complex Plot

- episodic simple plots – awful
- simple plots – reversal without “recognition” or “peripety”
- complex plots contain continuous reversal as well as “recognition, peripety” or both

- peripety** – a shift of what is undertaken to the opposite: in Oedipus Rex, Oedipus thinks he'll bring reassurance to himself but does the opposite
- recognition** – ignorance toward awareness
- pathos** – wounding Oedipus' eyes

Sophocles

- most celebrated tragedian, Aristotle's favorite
- relationship between the individual and the polis
- did not act in his plays, had a weak voice
- changed chorus size to 15

Oedipus Rex

- part of a trilogy, but not unified like Oresteia
- audience knew the stories but enjoyed Sophocles' interpretation of sequential development
- steeped in irony – what seems to be true and what is true
- a story of an individual as well as the state
- Aristotle believe Sophocles superior to Euripides
- modern audiences have more appreciation for Euripides

SUMMARY:

- Oedipus addresses the city
- a plague threatens Thebes
- Oedipus sends Kreon to oracle at Delphi to learn about plague
- oracle informs Kreon that an old defilement must be purged from Thebes – Laios' killer
- Oedipus swears to do just that
- Oedipus lashes out against Laios' killer, even if that person be a friend of Oedipus
- P. 75 dialog – remember
- Teiresias tells Oedipus of his fate
- Oedipus accepts that Kreon probably just wants the thrown

From Tragedy to Melodrama

- tragedy and comedy are the dominant forms until 19th century
- all tragedies are about rich people; kings and church leaders
- comedies about working class or middle class
- Hamlet is therefore obviously a Tragedy
- melodrama tells stories that seem like tragedies, yet a lot of them have happy endings

Melodrama and the Middle Class

- defining characteristic from social class perspective is that melodrama defends a middle class that wasn't stable in the renaissance
- feudal economy that drove Western Europe until the Renaissance consisted of aristocrats, knights versus serfs, slaves
- the development of artisans and specialists, the movement toward an urban sect, creates a middle class out of the late middle ages and Renaissance
- currency is developed in Renaissance
- formation of capitalist economy leads to for-profit theatre
 - fully in practice by Shakespeare
- Medieval plays were funded by church to learn about the bible they couldn't read
- with stability of middle class, beginning with its celebration in the novel, theatre of the middle class forms

Peter Brooks – The Melodramatic Imagination

-loss of the sacred

-King supported by evil aristocracy and manipulative church, it's time to separate the state and the church

-now what to write about?

The Moral Occult: "The domain of operative spiritual values which is both indicated within and masked by the surface of reality."

-moral code missing from 19th century literature

-melodrama fills the void

Snidely Whiplash

-evil guy with moustache comes to Nell, helpless heroine, who can't pay the rent, so Snidely has ideas (sex) – Nell claims she's virtuous and Dudley Do-Right saves the day (Birth of a Nation, Uncle Tom's Cabin)

-Uncle Tom's Cabin

-slavers, slaves, Mr. Shelby who'll save Tom

19th century culture in Europe driven by French revolution

-political ideas in late 18th century that defend middle class

-in France and United States, these are not democratic revolutions, their function was to bolster the middle class

-poor people don't engage in revolt until Marxist revolutions until 1919 (Soviet Union) and 1959 (Cuba)

-Shakespeare's Renaissance still believes in religion and mysticism, the Enlightenment believes in science (Isaac Newton – mid-19th century) $F=MA$, Human beings have the ability to understand the world using scientific method

-Enlightenment influences literature, too (Rousseau)

-Chemical Revolution – Antoine Lavoisier – discovered the composition of air and water, served on the commission that created the metric system

Social Class and Early Film Melodrama

-middle-class heroes and heroines

Evil Aristocracy

CLIP: *A Corner In Wheat* (DW Griffith, 1909)

-proto-Marxist film about guys cornering market on wheat which causes people to starve to death

-capitalists die by suffocating on their wheat in the end

-the rich screwing over the middle-class

Evil Working-Class

-CLIP: *The Lonely Villa* (DW Griffith, 1909)

-working class scum hanging around and attacking house when man leaves, robbing the house and perhaps raping the woman

-the working class screwing over the middle-class

- Straw Dogs?
- modernity on trial – Griffith inserts a narrative about the evils of technology
 - phones and cars can break down, but horses always work, so trust rural values

Features of the Melodrama

- pressuring reality – a guy’s hat fell off his head, what does it mean?
- intensive analysis of even miniscule gestures
- the excitement of the everyday
- an impossible desire to “say all”
- Manichean logic
- metaphor

Peter Brooks and Cultural Valuation

- Brooks’ example of the melodramatic imagination: Henry James
 - the hat falling gesture “seemed the blade of the guillotine”
 - lopping off the heads of the aristocracy to give birth to the middle class
 - an elegant mix of High (James and Balzac) and Popular (Pixerecourt) culture
- Guilbert de Pixerecourt – all but forgotten in the 1970’s until Brooks
 - 200 plays in 30 years just as important as James and Balzac
- Biograph – DW Griffith
 - destabilized notion of middle class – Walter’s parents and Walter’s in-laws

19th Century French Theatrical Melodrama

- Guilbert de Pixerecourt
 - La Fille de l’exile (1819)
 - middle class woman lives in cottage, evil guy attacks cottage, she runs out to the running water, the stage floods
 - French melodrama emphasizes spectacle over narrative (Pacemaker?)
- spectacle overrides narrative
 - DW Griffith, Way Down East (1920): the ice floe
 - woman from small town goes to big city, falls in love with a schmuck bigamist, not good for Victorian womanhood, so she goes home but the evil guy follows her, exposes their secret at a family dinner, so she flees into ice storm running from shame onto an ice floe, the 20th century equivalent of the ice floe in Uncle Tom’s Cabin (slavers and bloodhounds chasing Eliza across river)
 - at this time, Griffith’s world has been destroyed by modernity

Au Telephone (1902)

- guy lives with middle class family, goes to work and brags about having a telephone, the play ends with the murderers on the phone while the guy bragging has to listen
 - impotently holding the phone with nothing to do, a false sense of security by having the phone
- Grand Guignol (principal playwright was Andre De Lorde)

- form of theatre that emphasizes horror of modernity
- evil guy throws acid on a pretty woman's face
- The Lonely Villa*, American cinema's imposed happy ending
- parallel editing
- last minute rescue
- Griffith defends the virtue of Victorian period
- de Lorde a pessimist, Griffith an optimist

Where does Modernity begin?

- Walter argues with the French and American revolutions, many vote Industrial Revolution
- middle of 18th century, as late as World War I
- Lumiere screenings 1895 – at the same time, Andre de Lorde is making a form of theatre that references the history of melodrama, the victory of evil modernity
 - Griffith comes along and uses de Lorde's plot with a Victorian, virtuous, last-minute ending

Pixerecourt's Coelina (1800)

- textbook melodrama
- melodramatic triangle
- the desire to say all
- centers around Dufour's household, evil guy shows up, Truguelin, whose servant Germain does all his dirty work
- the painter Francisque is mute because Truguelin ripped out his tongue on a rocky pass
- Francisque is rescued from death by Michaud
- pantomimed prologue begins the play with an exposition
- great spectacle begins the play
- ringing truth out of untrue plot circumstances – amnesia!
- play begins and ends with human storms
- back up on the pass, the river floods, cutting off the people trying to get up to the mountain pass to rescue Coelina
- Truguelin is threatening Coelina's virginity and her life
- Michaud recognizes the scar on Truguelin's body as Francisque's attacker, puts the plot together, all ends happily with Truguelin going to jail
- weather expresses human strife
- reading faces; "he has such a kind face, he looks at me with such expressive eyes there can be no mistake." – Brooks essay about the gambler
- Coelina is the source material for *Way Down East*
- Brooks argues the moral occult replaces the religious occult, the Gods are no longer believed in, so dramatic weather implies human emotion or human folly
- Henry James reaction against the Victorian period with melodrama, expressivity in a repressed culture
- melodrama exposes what we cannot see – Dr. Andrevon tells Dufour of Truguelin: "If we could look inside the human heart we would see much evil I am afraid." (83)
- Manichean presentation of evil: Dufour says he'll see Francisque tomorrow morning. In an aside, Truguelin says, "That I will certainly prevent."

- Truguelin then orders his servant Germain to murder Francisque
- loss of the sacred – the theatre finds melodrama at the moment when conventional theatre, tragedy and comedy, no longer driven by religious ideas
 - Michaud argues for good treatment of the poor, but not for religious reasons
 - “Always treat the beggar fair, his misfortune is no disgrace: a turn of fate, unless you share, and you the poor man in his place. Do not ignore the poor fellow’s plight; giving makes the heart grow light.”
 - Michaud recognizes Truguelin by his scar – human bodies written by the truth, “You’re my daughter!”
- The Cheat* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1915)
 - evil Asian business man, woman with stock broker aristocrat husband, she decides she can make money on her own and loses everything in the market
 - she makes a deal with Asian man, who wants sex for her debts
 - so he brands her with iron
 - the end of the film is a trial about the murder of the Asian business man, which hinges upon who committed the murder
 - as soon as she exposes the scar, the whole murder is forgotten

Melodrama in America

- a case study of Uncle Tom’s Cabin
- 2nd best selling book behind the bible in the 19th century
- abolitionism
- Aiken’s 1856 theatrical adaptation
- most important piece of American sentimental literature

Uncle Tom in the Cinema

- film adaptation reliant on 19th century tableaux
- upon curtain closing, we get a stage picture, in the basic ur-melodrama of Pay Rent, Can’t Pay Rent, Yes You Can
- freezing the emotional moment

- Uncle Tom’s Cabin (Edwin S. Porter, 1903)
- making a 55 second film out of a lengthy novel
- he strings 14 important tableaux from Uncle Tom together
- astoundingly long film but doesn’t break practice of early cinema in U.S.
- each scene from six act play is one tableau, distilling popular moments from the story but requiring that the viewer be literate

Gangs of New York

- the complexity of the civil war, not all Northerners failed to support or even cared about slavery, Irish being used to fight for blacks when Irish were treated WORSE than blacks

James Baldwin – deeply critical of UTC, writer of Harlem Renaissance
 Noel Ignatiev – *How the Irish Became White*

Film and TV Melodrama

- category E Hollywood melodrama
- Imitation of Life* (Douglas Sirk, 1959): the mirror
 - Sirk got his start putting on Brecht plays in Weimar Germany
 - flees the Nazis in the 1950's
 - some of the most complex films ever made in the United States
 - applying melodrama to race relations
- basic melodramatic structure
- black family not treated well
- black daughter, Sarah Jane, escapes from mother because she's outrunning her blackness
 - Sarah Jane is beaten up for being black
- melodrama says reality needs to be pressured in such a way that we can extract truth out of it, because if we just let reality sit there, nothing happens
- push at emotions until normal operations of human being, repression, explodes
- human beings create bodily fluids, tears are one of them
- realistic theatre covers it over, melodrama doesn't trust realism
- modernism doesn't trust realism (Brecht), so he uses the aesthetics of theatre to constantly remind us that we're watching a play
- Sirk applies modernist techniques to melodrama
 - textually assaulting the status quo, pressuring static, inexpressivity, until it breaks
- DW Griffith's classicism, Sirk's modernism = Soap Opera

Days of Our Lives

Scar of Shame – Frank Peregini (1927)

The Television Soap Opera

- The Secret Storm* (1955): talking to alleviate the weight of the past
- Days of Our Lives* (c. 1994): close-ups “say all”
 - woman on trial has amnesia, she doesn't know “the truth”
 - she remembers, a flurry of close-ups follows, “It was Stefano!”
 - Billie's no longer on the hook, the judge dismisses the case
- One Life To Live* (c. 1994): The Manichean expressed via Nicki's/Vicki's schizophrenia
- The Bold and the Beautiful* (2007): The need to express in words
- Peter Brooks connects to Henry James and Balzac because he's a literary scholar who wants tenure, but soap operas are just as relevant
- Soaps have 50 characters, so these pivotal moments uncork a myriad of possibilities, hence the rapid cutting on close-ups
- flashbacks are most used on Soap Opera because how else would you reference previous activity in a show that's been on for 10, 20, or 30 years, perhaps 10,000 episodes
- the desire to say all: “My mother was a whore.”
 - reality is hidden, with pressure we'll find it

Stella Dallas – King Vidor (1937)

- husband and wife, husband is rich, wife is poor, their daughter wants to be like daddy, find money, so Stella sacrifices herself so her daughter can get married
- Stella is not allowed to watch her daughter get married, she's crying outside rich guy's house

Theatre in the Late 19th Century

- Pixerécourt is regarded as low culture, Ibsen is high, but Walter argues they're the same
- naturalist acting

Naturalism in the Theatre

- Naturalism: a literary movement influenced by science which believes art must critically examine human behavior.

- heredity
- environment

-1879, year of *A Doll's House*, one year after Zola writes his essay questioning the lack of naturalist theatre

- Stephen Crane is most notable Realist
- Emile Zola, "Naturalism in the Theatre"
- Emile Zola, *La Bête Humaine*

- the plot of all Zola novels involves some institution; stock market, judicial system, army, trains – and a story about the Lantier family
- the train decapitates Lantier, it's on its way to Prussia where France is ultimately crushed by the inferior Prussian Army
- indirectly this leads to the unified Germany, because French society has no leadership (a train with no head)
- Lantier is the way he is because of poisonous political environment and his genes (He gets drunk and wants to kill women.)
- differs from melodrama because there are no Manichean dialectics, no simple allegories of good overcoming evil
- A Doll's House* still borrows from melodramatic tradition, Krogstad is Snidely Whiplash, but the machine of theoretical naturalism hangs over the narrative

Naturalism and the Cinema

- CLIP: *La Bête Humaine* (Jean Renoir, 1938): Ending
- Zola's novel differs from the film. Its main character, Jacques Lantier, drives a train (is related to drunkard). Every time he sees a woman and is aroused, he wants to murder her. At the end of the novel, he and his friend, who work in the most intimate circumstances on the train, fight because an affair between them is discovered. They fall off the train and are decapitated.

- in 1936, a leftist government is elected
- Popular Front – workers movement, laborers deserve vacation
- Popular Front collapses in 1938, which leads to the Nazi success

-Lantier is used as a metaphor, he's buddies with the train worker rather than hating him like in Zola's novel

-Zola a naturalist, Jean Renoir is a poetic realist

-the other half of "The Human Beast" is understanding heredity's importance to plots in the larger environment of French life. Each novel is the study of an institution; the stock market, the army, the train system (a naturalist metaphor – train is the blood for France, the body), is put on trial. If the train system is corrupt, then society cannot survive. At the end, the train is no longer being driven because of the death of the two friends. As a metaphor, it describes the French army being thrown to their death because of no leadership.

-*La Bete Humaine* is written during about 1870, when Germany is unified following Franco-Prussian war

-France's superior army is destroyed because of its incompetence

-in 1936, leftist government is in power in France

-some folks' 19th century answer to reason behind white accomplishments based on genetics – others believe it has to do with environment of ethnic people living in ghettos

-the flaws of Enlightenment philosophy lead to 200 years of social struggle, women and blacks especially

-Darwin is the final nail in the coffin of the church

Naturalism as a Response

-**to romanticism (high form)** – Lord Byron in England, Hugo in France, the transcendentalists in the U.S. (Emerson and Thoreau) – Human Beings are the conduit to God, not the Church

-Emerson at Harvard Divinity School – "We don't need your religion, nature is the center of spirit."

-goes out into the woods, "I become a transparent eyeball."

-removing one's self from the artifice of civilization

-the politics of the Revolution, Rousseau in France, Jefferson in the U.S. – get the King out of here!

-Emerson writes *The Roderer* about a flower, reflecting on the god-like beauty of the flower

-the critique of romanticism is Hawthorne – misery is central to human existence, Puritans are fuckheads

-Melville is the undoing of transcendentalism – the Whale kicks human ass

-Romanticism is born from this belief in individualism, where individuals have the power to transform themselves

-Melville and Hawthorne were anti-transcendentalists

-**to melodrama (low form)** – celebrating the power of the middle class

-ingredients of the French and American Revolutions

-naturalism says we're stuck in a filthy environment and we inherit ugly genes

Naturalism's Social Sources

- industrialization
- we build things to control the world
- Darwinism
- we're evolving to adapt to all of this hostility
- industrialization produces a world that destroys Feudalism
- lord-serf culture is gone
- 19th century produces factory culture, urban rather than rural
- UK shifts to industrialization decades before the U.S.

A Doll's House (1879) as a Response to Naturalism

- Fourth-Wall Realism
 - CLIP: *Shadow of a Doubt* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1943): Uncle Charlie tells Young Charlie about "real life"
- Critique of Naturalism: Helmer's Naturalist philosophy is exposed as hypocrisy
- studying people like animals in a zoo
- the "Naturalist" character is a serial killer
 - a feature of Realism is that evil goes unpunished
- Torvald is the villain, like Charlie in SOaD
- p. 706, 2nd column, act 1: "You're an odd little one, just like your father. One takes you as you are, it's deep in your blood. Yes, these things are hereditary."
- A Doll's House* is both a critique and example of Naturalism in theatre – Torvald screams at Nora (p.370) – "Oh what an awful awakening...(she's a) criminal. Your father's flimsy values..."
- A Doll's House* exposes Torvald as a hypocrite, his attack on Nora for heredity is completely wrong
- Torvald falsely positions himself as a Romantic, wishing he could save her from something

George Bernard Shaw, "The Technical Novelty in Ibsen's Plays"

- "The Discussion"** – p. 731
 - the early 19th century unravels, there's no melodramatic hero, Nora has been waiting for a Romantic hero and realizes her husband is not that
 - p.733 – "Can you tell me what I did to lose your love?"
 - Nora realizes he's not a Romantic hero, that's the miracle that allows her to reflect on what's happened, motivating her to leave her family
- Critique of Melodrama**
 - instability of characters, Torvald and Krogstad are neither exclusively heroes nor exclusively villains
 - melodramas don't have political resolutions
 - Torvald didn't do the job of a hero, so Nora leaves
- Embrace of Modernism**
 - traditional 3 act play is broken apart
 - begins with two acts that are similar to other "well-made" 19th century plays
 - but it ends with an incredible third act, hence embracing Modernism
- Continuity with Shakespeare**

- Oedipus Rex, Hamlet, *A Doll's House*
- George Bernard Shaw calls the conversation at the end "The Discussion" and suggests Ibsen is the birth of modern drama because it ruptures Aristotelian narrative. The reason everybody hates Ibsen is because he writes political drama. It's considered unmotivated.
- nothing in *A Doll's House* follows Aristotle's idea of plot, the ending is completely disruptive and non sequitur
- (Bradbrook says it's simply like tragedy and differs because it's Norwegian, where dislocation and irony are emphasized)
- to get to *Waiting for Godot*, Ibsen's *A Doll's House* serves as a pivot point for modernist drama
- seasonal affective disorder is at the heart of *A Doll's House*, which takes place in Denmark
- The Discussion is like a Deus Ex Machina ending
- according to Shaw, in order to understand the complexity of life, naturalist theatre is essential
- in modernist theatre, all people have flaws and are morally corrupt, there are no Dudley Dorights as in melodrama

The Discussion in A Doll's House

- CLIP: *A Doll's House* (Joseph Losey, 1973): Jane Fonda as Nora
- Fonda a radical, rebelling against her father's generation
- heavily involved in anti-war movement, Hanoi Jane
- Neoconservatives provide the myth while stripping away the real. "How much freedom are you willing to sacrifice to be free?"
- Jane married a radical French filmmaker, visited Hanoi.
- portrait of Nora is viewed as a violation of the institution of marriage

An Intertextual Reading of A Doll's House

- Contemporary American Feminism
- CLIP: *Kramer vs. Kramer* (Robert Benton, 1979): Mother no good to the children without knowing herself.
- like *A Doll's House*, the closing of the doors are symbolic moments for feminism
- while *A Doll's House* is uncertain about the future of Nora, *Kramer vs. Kramer* indicts women as abandoning their duties at home

American Drama in the Early 20th Century

- Hybridizing European Theatrical Realism (Ibsen) with European Modernism (Symbolist Poetry)
- Susan Glaspell, along with Eugene O'Neill, formed the Provincetown Players – taking European ideas from plays like *A Doll's House* and combining them with modernism
- Trifles* (1916): Realist Murder-Mystery – rip the wall off the farm house, the husband kills his wife's birds, he's a real jerk
- woman has killed her husband, the police arrive, the neighbors are there
- The Verge* (1921): Symbolist Theatre – a botanist woman goes crazy, combining plants to produce a plant of liberation (symbolic meaning)

Eugene O'Neill

-*Desire Under the Elms* (1924)

-horrible family, New England farm, film noir

-a modernist description of the New England farmhouse

-tree limbs that protect and subdue, a "sinister maternity"

-Realist depiction of New England farm life (the hardship caused by the soil)

Vs.

-Symbolist depiction of New England farm life (the "sinister maternity" of the elms)

-O'Neill's story is coincident with the history of theatrical tragedy

-Intertextual Re-working of Ancient Greek Tragedy: Euripides, *Hippolytus*

Gender Studies

-Susan Glaspell vs. Eugene O'Neill

-Similarities

-both are interested in the isolation caused by New England farm life

-both are tragedies about women who murder

-Differences

-*Trifles* explores the differences between men's and women's culture; *Desire Under the Elms* is more conventional, about the destruction that the femme fatale brings to the family

-patriarchal culture says women only care about trivial matters, *Trifles* says that these trivial matters allow the women to solve the crime, creating a dramatic irony

An Intertextual Reading of Trifles

-feminist justice vs. patriarchal law

-women ignore the truth, allowing the murderess to get away with her crime

-*A Question of Silence* (The Netherlands, Marleen Gorris, 1983)

-an international art film adapted from Glaspell's short story, "A Jury of Her Peers"

-if *Trifles* is a first wave feminist text, then *A Question of Silence* is a second wave feminist text

A Question of Silence

-unmotivated mutilation of the male body

CLIP: The Murder

-three sequences to demonstrate that gender oppression is not class-specific

-first wave dealt with suffragette movement

-second wave begins with Betty Fernan's book and culminates in the 70's movement with equal rights amendment which never passed – built on the model of the first wave as an attempt to alter the constitution

-second movement was an attempt to go further with feminism since the data did not support the idea that the first wave was successful in eliminating unequal pay, etc.

-*Trifles* was first wave and *A Question of Silence* is second wave

-note: what might the women in *A Question of Silence* do with Ann Coulter? I'd like to see the results on Pay-Per-View.

From International Art Cinema to Popular Hollywood Cinema

-*Legally Blonde* (Robert Luketic, 2001)

-Adrienne Rich, “woman-identified woman”

-the hair salon as the site of the “trifles”

-solves the crime because of her knowledge of hair dyes

-woman identification – when women discover they have more in common because of their gender struggles, despite their differences, they can then combat patriarchy