

INTRO. TO UNIT 7

I. AMERICAN LITERATURE IN THE 1960s

New possibilities & opportunities (election of John F. Kennedy --> "new Augustan age of poetry and power" Robert Frost)

Agreement with Russia to cease nuclear + changes in relationship whites/blacks + loosening up of sexual codes & official censorship (new oral contraceptive) --> more life-affirming, less restrictive era

1960s = "liberation" from official standards of correctness (journalistic)

From Beat Generation to trial of Adolph Eichmann (Mailer's *Advertisement for Myself*, 1959; Tom Wolfe ("New Journalism"), Susan Sontag (*Against Interpretation*, 1966; Beatles & morals of *Playboy* magazine

Relation of such writing to major public disaster = not clear

Vietnam + riots in black ghettos of decaying cities + turmoil in universities + murder of Robert Kennedy & Martin Luther King + omnipresence of drugs + rise of pornography (sexual "revolution") + decline of "the family" & exacerbations in relations men/women (women's movement) = severe dislocations unavailable to be dealt with representational & realistic modes

II. SUMMARY OF XX CENTURY AMERICAN DRAMA

Basic theme of America's major dramatists = effort to survive (alienation)

Protagonists cling to human values superseded by material ones

Rhythm of life changed & purpose --> Nostalgia active but ironic force (disproportion, sense of loss, betrayal) --> Miller, O'Neill, Williams & Albee

Memory = source of absurdity (recalls dreams failed to be actualized)

Some final determination survives --> poetic, urgency to estimate personal value, make assessment of oneself apart from pragmatics of public world

==> Need to remake world (1930s & 1960s) --> transforming social &

political priorities + constructing dreams, illusions & fantasies

1930s = some expectation to be translated into social fact

1940s & 1950s = confidence disappears --> social imperfection in character & human nature --> battle with imperfection internalized (pathology & model of human behavior, Calvinist)

Materialism, capitalism, primacy of external world \neq primary causes of moral collapse but consequence of it

III. THEATER IN THE 1960s, 1970s & 1980s

The Village Voice + Vietnam bombed + Blacks arrested + drugs discovered

Program = mimeographed list of credits on cheap colored paper

Cement floor leads to playing area (oval shapes of diverse colors)

Actor stretch, twist, gyrate, oblivious of the audience

Electronic music sounds faintly --> actors co-ordinate to art (Tai Chi Chuan)

After ceremonial bow --> actors take makeshift costumes behind the ovals

Around the audience (clap, stamp, whistle, slap bodies rhythmically) -->

house dims, performance begins (= Off-Broadway, mid 1960s)

Burgeoning of live theater in 1960s, less during 1970s, and stable in 1980s

(<-- Artaud and Grotowsky move performance from texts & toward actors + from developing plots in time towards filling scenic space)

1950s, formal dramas (Beckett, Ionesco & Pinter) eroded conception of language as means of communication

1960s, empty political rhetoric further undermined status of words --> human body spoke more convincingly than words

Happenings less frequent (- streets & parks + college campuses)

Fluidity of art/life boundaries <--> artifice of strict style

Terminology (anthropology, politics, psychology, sociology; dance, music &

sculpture) & mixed media experiments 1960s --> mixed art exper. 1970s

Off-Broadway born in mid-1950s (Obie awards 1956)

Revivals of drama classics/translations of recent European plays ('Absurd')

Second 'off' = *against*. Off-Broadway --> low-budget, traditional performances intellectually respectable (classical/contemporary)

Off-Off-Broadway = no tradition but rebellious spirit (Joe Cino, Caffe Cino; Ellen Stewart, Caffe LaMama; Reverend Al Carmines, Judson Memorial Church; Ralph Cook, St Marks-in-the-Bowrie)

Choregi welcomed playwrights, performers, audiences in a wide variety of energetic, inexpensive productions --> plays not move uptown

~ Broadway -Arthur Kopit, Terrence MacNally, Landford Wilson-; Off-Broadway -Ronald Ribman, David Rabe, John Guare, David Mamet

Acting ensembles & medium subservient to message & minority experiences & anchor in other arts & Sam Shepard