

## UNIT 2(I)

### I. INTRODUCTION: DRAMA OF A NEW NATION, 1800-1865. A PERIOD OF EXPERIMENTATION AND IMITATION

### II. NATIVE AMERICAN CHARACTER TYPES: JONATHAN, SAMBO AND METAMORA

- Feelings of personal and national independence.
- Anti-foreign attitude (Irish) - "American Party".
- Representative American man (Jonathan) - The Negro - The Indian.

#### I.1. The Yankee Character

David Humphreys' *The Yankee in England* (1815). (Samuel Woodworth: *The Forest Rose; or, American Farmers*, 1825 - Joseph S. Jones: *The People's Lawyer*, 1839 - Cornelius A. Logan: *The Vermont Wool Dealer*, 1840 - *The Yankee Peddler; or, Old Times in Virginia*, 1841 - other plays).

- Yankee gals -Jedidah in *The Stage Struck Yankee*, Jerusha in *The Yankee Pedler* .

#### II.2. The Negro Character

- Social inferiority exploited by the Yankee. (Zeke, from *Fashion*)
- Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Boucicault's *The Octoroon*.

#### II.3. The Indian Character

- *Ponteach; or, The Savages of America* (1776) by Robert Rogers.
- *Pocahontas* (1830) by George Washington Parke Custis

- *Metamora* (1829) by John Augustus Stone, the most successful on the stage. - American backwoodsman plays -James Kirke Paulding's *The Lion of the West* (1831)

### **II.3.1. THE INDIAN RIDICULED: JOHN BROUGHAM'S BURLESQUES**

- Brougham's *Metamora; or, The Last of the Pollywogs* (renacuajo) (1847).  
- *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas; or, The Gentle Savage* (1855).

### **II.3.2. THE INDIAN REPLACED: APPEARANCE OF THE BACKWOODSMAN**

- *The Lion of the West* (1831), by James Kirke Paulding  
- From "noble savages" to "varmint(alimañas) Redskins".

## **III. MIRROR OF THE TIMES**

### **III.1. The Comedy of America**

- Farce or farce-comedy. Witty portrayal of some aspect of society with well-drawn characters who were logically motivated in both speech and action and whose thoughts and struggles directed the plot of the play.  
- Plays with a foreign setting nearest to comedy; American people and society were caricatured. Fashionable life.  
- Three important aspects: dependence upon foreign setting; reflection of American attitude toward the American people, society, and morals; and concern for realistic touches.

#### **III.1.1. THE COMIC IDEA WITH A FOREIGN SETTING**

- They wrote to moralize, to satirize, to inform, and to entertain. (James Nelson Barker, *How to Try a Lover*, 1817 - John Howard Payne and Washington Irving, *Charles the Second; or, The Merry Monarch*, 1824)

### **III.1.2. FASHIONABLE LIFE**

- Genuine and an imitated sophistication became evident.  
 - Plays about fashionable life: part satire, part farce, with a strain of melodrama, a pretension toward social comedy, and a liberal amount of frank nationalism. (James N. Barker's *Tears and Smiles* (1807) - Joseph Hutton's *Fashionable Follies* (1815) - J. H. Hackett's *Moderns; or, A Trip to the Springs* (1813) - James K. Paulding's *The Bucktails* (petimetres); *or, Americans in England* (1815, 1847))

#### **III.1.2.a. ANNA CORA MOWATT RITCHIE AND *FASHION; OR, LIFE IN NEW YORK*, 1845**

### **III.2. An Active and Growing Society**

- Population increases and shifts.(mass immigration of Europeans)  
 - Social problems ---> anti-foreignism.  
 - Temperance movements  
 - Threat to freedom of worship in the Roman Catholicism.  
 - Mormon trek westward: religious freedom & geographical expansion.  
 - 1830 to 1860: seeds of Civil War were planted: problems of Negro slavery & abolitionists' arguments, underground railroad, Compromise of 1850, "Bleeding Kansas", Dred Scott decision, John Brown.

#### **III.2.1. RACIAL GROUPS: IRISH**

- John Murdock's *The Triumphs of Love* (1795) and John Minshull's *Rural Felicity* (1801).
- Heroic actions and comic ---> popular hero.
- James Pilgrim, popular Irish-American farces: *Paddy the Piper*(gaitero) (n.d.) and *Shandy Maguire; or, The Bould Boy of the Mountains* (1851).
- Shandy typical Irishman: quick with his wits, his fists, and a joke, softhearted hero: protected widows, saved heroine, and beat up ruffians.
- An actor-manager-playwright, Brougham:*The Irish Fortune Hunter* (1856) and *Temptation; or, The Irish Immigrant* (1856).
- Boucicault play's concerned with Ireland rather than with the Irish in America: "sensational dramas", his Irish plays -*The Colleen Bawn* (1860), *Arrah-na-Pogue* (1864), *The O'Dowd* (1872), and *The Shaughraun* (1874).

### III.2.2. RACIAL GROUPS: GERMAN

- "Dutchmen" objects of ridicule, sometimes sympathy: *The Persecuted Dutchman; or, The Original John Schmidt* (1845) by actor S. Barry ???, and *The Dutchman's Ghost* (1857)

### III.2.3. PLAYS ABOUT MORMONS

- Anonymous *Deseret Deserted; or, The Last Days of Brigham Young* (1858); *Life of the Mormons at Salt Lake* (1858) by C. W. Taylor (?); and *The Mormons; or, Life at Salt Lake City* (1958) by Dr. Thomas Dunn English.

### III.2.4. PLAYS ABOUT THE MOVEMENT WESTWARD

- Backwoodsman's plays, trip to California and society there: anonymous *A Trip to California Gold Mines* (?), and *A Live Woman in the Mines* (1857). *Fast Folks; or, Early Days of California*, by Joseph A. Nunes.

- Social history, local color, and folk drama.

### **III.2.5. TEMPERANCE PLAYS**

- American Temperance Society, Boston 1826: Clifton Tayleure, *The Drunkard's Warning* (1856); H. Seymour, *Temperance Doctor* (n.d.); and two minor, W.H. Smith's *The Drunkard; or, The Fallen Saved* (1844) and William W. Pratt's dramatization of the novel by Timothy S. Arthur, *Ten Nights in a Bar Room and What I Saw There*.

### **III.2.6. SLAVERY AND THE SOUTH**

- Congressional action in 1808, importation of slaves illegal.  
 - "Fortunate" slave vs. black bondage: *Uncle Tom's Cabin, The Octoroon*. Mrs. Stowe's second novel of slavery, *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1956).

### **III.3. The Appeal of Melodrama before the Civil War**

- Melodrama appealed to majority.  
 - Theater controlled by manager (money) and actor (popularity)  
 - Farce is related melodrama as popular entertainment.  
 (*Mazzepe; or, The Wild Horse of Tartary, 1825 - The Sentinels; or, The Two Sargeants, by Richard Penn Smith, 1829 - The Sensationalism of Dion Boucicault: The Poor of New York, 1857*)

### **III.4. Shortcuts to Popularity: Adaptations, Translations, Burlesques**

- American dramatists looked to Europe -especially England: characters, settings, themes, plots. William Dunlap, John Howard Payne, Nathaniel Parker Willis, James Nelson Barker, Richard Penn Smith.

- (1) complete play adapted to American circumstances - translated,
- (2) particular characters or plot themes from successful plays,
- (3) language of foreign dramatists.
- John Brougham and Dion Boucicault - major adaptors of foreign literature.
- American managers and actors suspicious of native authors.
- Translations and adaptations: faster & easier for average dramatists, safer for managers, and popular with audiences.
- *Nights in a Bar Room*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and *Rip Van Winkle*. -
- Dramatized novels of Cooper, Robert Montgomery Bird, William Gilmore Simms and John Pendleton Kennedy, Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and Poe's *The Gold Bug*.
- Burlesque of plays, ridiculous mocking of original work.

### **III.5. Poets and Novelists as Playwrights**

- Poets & novelists as playwrights: Washington Irving (with John Howard Payne) with *Charles the Second* (1824), Poe with *Politian* (1835) and Longfellow with the poetic dramas *The Spanish Student* (1842) or *The Golden Legend* (1851).
- Robert Montgomery Bird, Nathaniel Parker Willis or George Henry Boker.

### **III.6. Transatlantic Evaluation: American Drama in England before the Civil War**

- J. H. Payne's first play at Covent Garden in 1815, foothold for American drama in the London theater.
- Peculiar traits of Americans: Yankee plays, Negro minstrels and skits, and pioneer adventure plays enjoyed long runs in London.

- American social caricatures and popular plays such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Rip Van Winkle*.
- American poetic tragedy, *The Gladiator*, by R. M. Bird, mixed reception in England.
- Backwoodsman plays, *The Kentuckian; or, A Trip to New York*, adapted from James Kirke Paulding, one of the most popular in England, & adaptations of Cooper's novels.
- Most successful and popular, adaptations of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Boucicault's *The Octoroon* and other plays treating Southern problems.
- Problems leading to the Civil War, fascinate contemporary audiences.
- Plays adapted and produced in England: Boucicault's adaptation of *Rip Van Winkle*, Mrs. Ritchie's *Fashion*, *Pocahontas*...

#### **IV. YANKEE ORIGINALITY: AMERICA'S CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD THEATER. The Minstrel Show, The Showboat Theater and The Tom Show**

##### **IV.1. The Minstrel Show**

- Thomas Dartmouth Rice Father of American Minstrelsy: song and dance between acts of play.

##### **IV.2. The Showboat**

- William Chapman's "drama barge", one-night shows: entire spectrum of theater fare (Shakespeare, minstrels, melodramas, latest New York plays).

##### **IV.3. The Tom Show**

- *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: attack on slavery, melodrama and spectacle play.

- George L. Aiken's, but variety in the stage versions.
- Tommers, and "Tom Shows": family of troubadours living the various characters in the melodrama.
- Aim: virtue must be rewarded and sin punished!

## QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS (UNIT 2/I):

- 1.- Which is the main theme of Pocahontas? Can you explain the plot?
- 2.- Can you tell about the meanings of character's names in the story? What can you say about the Prolegomena and The Song of Pocahontas?
- 3.- Can you find any instances which contrive to the burlesque and farcical character of the play such as unreal actions, funny accents, distortions of language, Indians mocked, exaggerated actions, gestures?
- 4.- What is your personal opinion about this play? Do you think it is worth-reading? Indicate the most important achievements features, and the main weaknesses of the play.
- 5.- What is the plot of Anne Cora Mowatt's *Fashion*?
- 6.- Can you describe the themes as well as the main characters of the play?
- 7.- Name any instances in the play relating to farce and melodrama.
- 8.- Do you think this is a comical play? Can you describe any humorous instances in the play?
- 9.- Indicate the literary characteristics as well as the aims of the play
- 10.- Give your personal opinion of the play *Fashion*.

## ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS (UNIT 2/1):

1.- Which is the main theme of Pocahontas? Can you explain the plot?

The main theme is burlesque attack on the Indian plays which were popular in American in the first half of the nineteenth century. The role and image of the Indian changed, due to the American expansion towards the West. From 'good savages' to 'varmint Redskins'.

The plot develops around the story of the Indian Princess Pocahontas and, daughter of Powhatan, and her love relationship with Captain John Smith.

2.- Can you tell about the meanings of character's names in the story? What can you say about the Prolegomena and The Song of Pocahontas?

Names of characters have a funny sound, with meanings describing his major features in a comical manner ('Kros-As-Can-Be', 'O-You-Jewel').

Prolegomena locates the action of the play in Virginia, from an entire epic poem found in the pocket of man in armour in Cape Cod, a quite improbable fact. Ironical references to Longfellow, Finnish --> in reference to the difficulty of reading and also as a humorous instance. Also mocking the Old Anglo-Saxon poetry (Viking - Anno Gothami 235).

In The Song of Pocahontas, we find a humorous recreation of the old Anglo-Saxon poetry.

3.- Can you find any instances which contrive to the burlesque and farcical character of the play such as unreal actions, funny accents, distortions of language, Indians mocked, exaggerated actions, gestures?

-Shakespeare (406). -Funny language('Shut up, switch off, dry up, or go to bed'(407). -Distortions by a supposed accent: 'Nuff'(407). -Indians mocked (songs(408) , comical alliterations(408), exaggerated actions('Hang them! Hang them!')(409)), gestures(), comic references to classical literature (Hernani, Shakespeare, Italian opera, Metamora, Mrs. Beecher Stowe...), funny accents(Rolff - German, Tyrolean(415)), references to city places such as Union Square(417), historical people ('A la Rob Roy' (418)), woman's rights (419), plays on words ('Husband for thee I scream!' 'Lemon or Vanilla?')(419), betting wife by playing cards (420)...

4.- What is your personal opinion about this play? Do you think it is worth- reading?

Indicate the most important achievements, and the main weaknesses of the play.

*Pocahontas* is worth-reading as a historical landmark in the American drama. It is witty, funny and quite well-constructed for a burlesque play. Its main weaknesses lie in the lack of interest if not viewed in a theater and the distance in language and circumstances for the contemporary reader.

5.- What is the plot of Anne Cora Mowatt's *Fashion*?

Plot in Unit 2.

6.- Can you describe the themes as well as the main characters of the play?

- Main theme: relationship individual-society, foreign dress vs. native gold

- Other themes: Europe vs. America (332); Trueman mocks fashion (325); Trueman about fashion (336); Trueman (324); Man's market (320, 321)

- Characters: mainly caricatures, variety of social levels. - Zeke (Sambo). Negro character (accent); Tiffany (cowed by wife) (326); (money ambitious, urban, bourgeois) (326); Snobson (ambitious, unscrupulous, mean & bad mannered) (325), coward (345); Trueman (straight, sincere, moral, good citizen, development of Yankee character) (323); Gertrude (rural, prudent, good) (327) (Yankee girl) (327). independent, pure (339); Mrs. Tiffany (domineering, shabby, ambitious, snob); Count (unscrupulous, Chesterfieldian, ambitious, liar, villain) (327)

7.- Name any instances in the play relating to farce and melodrama.

- Aspects of farce (gestures, exaggerated actions), cudgel (porra). Ridiculous (Adolph instead of Zeke) (322); French words with accent (Millinette, Mrs. Tiffany)

- Melodrama.

Disguises: Count (aside) (323); Count hiding (338); Trueman discovers Gertrude is his granddaughter (343); Misunderstanding of Gertrude's actions by Trueman & Mrs. Tiffany (339).

Letters, Forgery theme: Religion (318); Theater problems (318); French fashion (319); ; Snobson discovers Tiffany's forgery (345).

Dastardly villain: Recognition of Count (324); Gertrude discovers Count's imposture (344, 335); Confesses (346).

8.- Do you think this is a comical play? Can you describe any humorous instances in the play?

Mrs. Tiffany's shabby talk with fashioned French words and expressions, Zeke's character & language

9.- Indicate the literary (and linguistic) characteristics as well as the aims of the play *Fashion* by Anne Cora Mowatt?

- West (346); Corruption in the city (346)
- Plays on words 'Count Joli-made-her' (322)
- Nouns of characters, conjure up particular features: Trueman, Jolimaitre, Prudence (ironic) (329); Twinckle (brillante?); Seraphina (angelical); Fogg?(empañar, velar); Snobson(ironic, entendido)
- Very American (323) (money matters)
- Yankee (Trueman) despises Negro (Zeke) (324, 339)
- Hypocrisy (Trueman talks about) (325)
- Tiffany rebels (against Mrs. Tiffany) (330, 331) --> wants Snobson instead of Count.
- Woman's affirmation (Gertrude) (337)

10.- Give your personal opinion about the aims and achievements of the play *Fashion*.

- Social comedy, satire in five acts. Her major contribution to the drama. Landmark for the development of social comedy in the history of American drama.
- Society satirized, wit, epigrammatic (321) quality of lines.
- Irony (Mrs Tiffany's origins) (320).
- Charm and brilliance. Understood society well, clever writer.
- Her objectives: foreign dress <---> native gold.
- Criticism of America (346) <--> American native qualities (346)
- Epilogue with final moral lesson (347).

