

INTRODUCTION TO UNIT 7

SHERWOOD ANDERSON

I. WHITMAN'S CHALLENGE TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Early XX cent., United States major power on international scene

Accession of power in American writing (<-- 1870, *Democratic Vistas* by Walt

Whitman --> 2 challenge = emergence of artists + profound crisis

Between Wars & Great Depression, 1929 --> ambitious missions for arts

(confidence & boldness + anxiety & urgency to check traditions & environment for human fulfillment)

II. REASSESSMENT OF AMERICAN CULTURAL TRADITIONS

Reassessment of American cultural traditions (creative writers & critics)

(Emerson --> traditions in state of flux: Dickinson, James, Whitman, Twain
rediscover & New Englanders -Thoreau, Emerson & Hawthorne- remain)

Puritan tradition under scrutiny (moral severity & middle-class "booboisie")

Outside New England: claims to recognition & importance

New York City --> publishing center of the nation (Manhattan & Harlem)

"Harlem Renaissance" (black) & Greenwich Village (white middle-class)

III. THE CRISIS

Harlem & Village --> "The Jazz Age"/"The Twenties" = experimentation with radical ideas & new modes in arts (<- response to crisis in Am. culture)

Novelists Hemingway & Dos Passos witnessed World War I = senseless slaughter (<--> pacifist philosopher John Dewey & poet Ezra Pound)

Intellectual disenchantment --> scrutinize democracy & institutions

Racial violence & industrial strife --> socialist movement

Late 1920s --> extended crisis into 1930s --> traffic in "bootleg" liquor + gang warfare --> decay in private and public morals + poverty spread through rural areas + stock market crash, 1929 --> shock waves to Europe (fascist Italy & Nazi Germany) --> World War II, 1939

Industrial retrenchment + unemployment & industrial strife (corporations & labor force) --> Roosevelt's "New Deal", 1933 (cope with bad conditions)

American writers --> redefining traditions & treating social problems + looked to Europe for ideas, programs & forms

IV. AMERICA AND EUROPE

European radicalism (Anarch./Comm.) heightened by 1917 Russian Revol.

Marxist thought (Max Eastman/John Reed) --> *The Masses*, *The Liberator*, *The New Masses* (Communist party) = critique of American society (<-- H. L. Mencken, *The American Mercury* + *The New Republic* & *The Nation* Marxist theory --> Edmund Wilson, Theodore Dreiser, John Dos Passos, Herbert Gold & Richard Wright in 1930s --> suppression of dissent in Russia + Stalinist Russia with Hitler's Germany ==> disillusion

Freudianism --> unconscious/irrational in human psyche, dramas & dream symbols in mind by mechanisms (psychological/social) & sexual repression + "depth psychology" to cure psychic illness --> first, acceptance in America (Ludwig Lewisohn's *Expression in America*, 1932)

Alfred Adler & Carl Jung --> new versions to literature of psychoanalysis
1940 --> "psychiatrist", "archetypal symbol", "Oedipus complex" = modern mythology (Conrad Aiken's poems + Eugene O'Neill's plays...)

V. MODERNISM

Convergence of tendencies in modern culture + accidental circumstances + concerted effort of influential writers (conservative & radical)

1908, Imagism + reaction of English writer T. E. Hulme against old poetry

Modernism = dramatizes discontinuity + fragmentation + concern with language ==> capture pace, tensions & rhythms of urban life + shaped cadences of black dialect, southern rhetoric, colloquial speech (prose narration, dialogue in fiction & lyric poetry)

Work of art = well-made artifact + reality of object (reader's attention)

Vanguard writers --> articulating barrier writer/audience by shock

New --> playfulness + virtuoso posturing + frivolity (<--> solemnity)