

WESTERN EUROPEAN ART

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PAINTING

ANCIENT PERIOD

Backdrop. In the sequence of profiles of Western European culture, from the viewpoints of various functions—philosophy, religion, music, dance—we have faced rebuffs. Taking the notion of *western*, seriously, we have time after time discovered that Western Europe, in the ancient or pre-Christian phase, was simply a dark and undeveloped appendage of the Roman Empire. We have little to say about the area of Western Europe in the pre-classical period, except that it was provincial, undeveloped, and in many ways primitive—in its living units, its folkways among territories still hardly cultivated, its relative vulnerability to the immediate perils of life, from wild animals to wild people.

Amazement. Given this temporal and geographical setting, we are stunned to find that in extensive cave paintings, at least thirty five thousand years before us, in Lascaux, Altemira, Les Eyzies, over a wide area of southeast France and Spain, there are networks of cave paintings, many of them cut sharply into the rock faces of deep caves. Many of the thousands of these sophisticated paintings created onto bare rock depict hunting scenes, rituals for cults we have no way to understand, and landscapes. (Startlingly enough, these profusions of highly subtle art can also be found deep in the Sahara, on cave walls similar to those in Europe. Many of the patterns on the African walls are almost identical to those found in Europe.)

Agriculture. To say more than this, about these paintings is almost impossible, for we have nothing but ill lit caves for evidence. To say less is useless. One direction of response is this: that the purposeful concern of these cave painters seems clearly involved with successful hunts, landscape maintenance, and in many scenes fertility: aren't these all panels of the vast looming human change, to an upcoming agricultural existence, the Neolithic revolution in agriculture, in which the quality of human life as a whole will be dramatically advanced?

POSTCLASSICAL PERIOD

Christian. The postclassical trajectory of European painting—once again excluding the highly sophisticated decorative painting of Rome itself, which we are viewing as part of the classical, not the western European, world—involves the effort to find a new set of visual styles for the quickly self-empowering Christian element in western Europe. Frescos, illuminated manuscripts, and sculptures were the main painted surfaces, on which the early Christians tried to express their distinctive view of the world.

Their limits, in the pre-Nicene period (prior to 325), were tight. The Christians were a small a community, still despised by the majority, and poor. For a long time symbols such as the peacock, the fish, and the vine were the chief visual benchmark of the growing Christian community.

Development. Visual symbols of the new, and often proscribed, religion were everywhere to be found in the spreading Christian culture-zone, but they were necessarily restrained; one might say for the next four hundred years after Nicaea, a period during which Christian culture and art was slowly merging with the eastern traditions of the Byzantine, as well as spreading throughout Rome—where the papal presence guaranteed a climate for the arts, despite the serious eclipse of all the now abandoned structures of *Romanitas*. In the western 'Roman empire'—say in the courts of Charlemagne, in the monasteries of Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England—painting on manuscripts, decoratable surfaces of churches—these arts continued to be refined, and while remaining in the huge shadow of gothic architecture—construction at the monastery at Cluny began in 911, at Chartres Cathedral in 1194, at Notre Dame de Paris in 1163—the painting arts grew steadily in sophistication and acclaim. Cimabue (1240-1302) and Giotto (1266-1337) were on the horizon, with their Byzantine tinged portraits of Christ—angular, severe, bearded—slowly emerging out of themselves into portraits belonging to all mankind, rather than surges of regional historical brilliance.

EARLY MODERN PERIOD

Renaissance

Awakening. The Renaissance, as we know, is often described as the period of the rediscovery of the ancient classics, and in fact it was a time when, with the advent of the printing press, the growth of cities with their libraries and universities, and the rise of international trade and commerce, new ranges of achievement for the human imagination were swimming into sight. How such ambient circumstances blend with imaginative painting achievements on the ground—Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519); Michelangelo (1475-1564); Raphael (1483-1520); —*is the mystery of a fructuant culture* at its high period—Athens, St. Petersburg, San Francisco, Florence—when a culture is, as we say today, at its hottest. Let's just say, *something happens*, and within a century painting has become, not just an ancillary art to monumental architecture, certainly not just a stiff posture of hieratic fidelity (the Byzantine saint) but a full expression of a culturally enabled genius, replacing his life with art. Leonardo enables our thinking of the whole perfection of the human body, updating thereby the deep humanism of a Greek sculptor like Praxiteles, who was part of the background being discovered through the Renaissance; Michelangelo—say in the Sistine Chapel, where he painted out his high period—was devoted to the complex and colorful world of proportions and etherealities that made up his divine faith; Raphael, with a faultless sense of movement-color, was above all a visual master of the Holy Family, but above all of the human face, his portraits compacting in themselves all that his French contemporary, Montaigne, wanted to say about both the nobility and the baseness of the human condition.

Baroque. A slider concept, like early modern, may help to carry us over to the deeply different painting world of the Baroque, say 1660—1800. Arrival on those shores will leave us breathless with new scenarios—not only the deep and dark of antiquity expunged, but the struggle of paganism with Christianity on its last legs. A whiff of the great names may have to suffice—Caravaggio, Rubens, Claude Lorrain, Nicolas Poussin, Greuze, Watteau—the names of masters of grace—yes, of course, also violence to the fulness of life—grace in the sense that the art which invested these geniuses in lives of artifice, was in fact truly a life in which life and art were intertwined. The tribute to artifice, always implicit in this Baroque period work, always inflects the painter's interest in the real world. One thinks of antique scenes in Lorrain, ports and harbors and misty evening landscapes, or of vast historical conflict of armies and men, in which every tree seems to proclaim *I am a tree Claude painted*; the history of art seemed one with history in actuality.

Question A slider concept is useful, but what in fact was going on between Leonardo and Lorrain. Can we say that in those one hundred and fifty years something like a modern world view was being sketched? By the baroque period, the existential immediacy of the Renaissance is absent, that fury of

excitement that emerged with the rediscovery of the classical, that is with the energies of an open and intense cultural zone not hampered by religious strictures or social niceties. In place of that immediacy there is now a pulling back from the requirement that the painter should say all and look everything in the face. The pulling back may simply be 'forgetting how to do it,' and needing time, which could be code language for needing revolution, which was not far away.

MODERN PERIOD

Revolutions The rash of revolutions, which from the late eighteenth century were to tit-tat across the face of the industrialized world, from Mexico City to Saint Petersburg, by way of Paris and Washington, was to be part of yet another mind set reshape—postclassical, Renaissance, Early Modern, Modern—which have had their repercussions in painting, an art which prides itself on its inability to hide anything. This new world, which to the parents of a child born in 1930 seemed the 'modern world,' was to contain as many surprises in the art gallery as in the streets or the battlefields, and those surprises were all interconnected. Let's think of a few of the things we saw in the gallery, while we were watching the news (or listening to it) with increasing astonishment. Let's call those things by the names of their painters: Ernst, *Ubu Emperor*, 1923; Picasso, *Guernica*, 1937; Chagall, *I and the Village*, 1981; Hockney, *A Bigger Grand Canyon*, 1998.

Paintings Is there anything revolutionary about the four paintings chosen above? Ernst, because he was a wit as well as a social critic, chose to make his parody of the grand dictator fit the comic mode of a top spinning in the sand. Nuff said. He mocks authority. In 1923 that might still have seemed naughty, but hardly dangerous. And yet there was a danger, for sure, involved with the statement Ernst was making. If you were a fellow mocker you were headed for political danger down the road. Look out! Picasso strikes out at the dictators, as Ernst mocked out. Ernst worked a cartoon, Picasso presented a torn and bloody screen covered with the ruins of a bombed Spanish village. Chagall, in 'I and the Village,' fills us in on the gentler side of political harshness, but in the way he makes the eyes of a man and of a goat fuse, he makes it clear that the modern painterly eye must be at home in the full range of imaginative settings. Hockney tweaks. Like Chagall he wants a revision of perception, but he does not give it to you, he proposes it. Bigger Grand Canyon, eh? Always adroit and at an angle, Hockney makes us see a strange world in a familiar way. Four small revolutions.

Modern. Modern goes on, demanding reasons why it should exist, at the same time that the immense ocean of visual symbols, the mirrors mirroring mirrors effect of our time, keeps slurping up the latest shocker with no apparent indigestion. True while it is, that painting—good painting-- reflects its time, it is nonetheless true that the historical categories in which painting develops are not fixed, even in hindsight. Where we are going in painting now, will to some extent depend on where we are going as a culture. Is it plausible that painting might, given its embeddedness in a world made of camera images and instant digital copies—not to mention competitor arts like the video—that painting might be replaced in the repertoire of human creations? The opposition will cry that nothing could replace the visual imagination, as a maker of worthy images of man. The journey charging forward at Lascaux, by that account, is destined to continue, by some creative mandate that is part of being human. A selfie and a self-portrait have nothing to do with one another.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Once an historical sequence, like that of European art, is established, it is possible to see how one link leads to the next. (Which links, in the history of European painting, seem to fit together most naturally?) But a seeming breakthrough set of actions, like the cave painting in southwestern Europe does not seem to come with a precedent built into them. Where do you think the impulse to these paintings came from?

Does 'modern painting' seem to you to be about the nature of the visual symbol, and the uses of that symbol to designate patterns in the mind? If so—please speak up to the contrary!—does that mean that photography, for example, can as a rival surpass the art of painting, as a depiction of the world? Can you think of ways in which the great painter goes beyond photography, in the search to depict the world? Has the camera any imagination?

Painting is a popular entertainment activity, and there are millions of 'Sunday painters' in the world today. What drives them to this activity? They say they are 'taking it easy,' but if so why in this manner? Are they caressing familiar places? Recreating parts of the visible world? Seeking for some kind of dexterity-perfection?

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SCULPTURE

ANCIENT PERIOD

Fragments. In tracing the earliest art works of Western Europe we find an abundance of sculptural examples dating from around the time of the cave painting explosion in south western France and northern Spain (that is, ca. 35,000 years ago.) We find these prehistoric sculptures of animals and birds scattered through caves in the mountains of Germany, while other types of sculpture—fertility figures with huge breasts and vaginas—appear throughout Europe, in rockbeds, streams, and on mountainsides. To indicate the diversity and long duration of this ancient western European art tradition, think only of the advent of Celtic metalwork sculpture, which made its way west across Europe, only in the last years of the pre Christian, between 400-100 B.C., and which brought with it metalwork designs which still awe us by their craftsmanship.

POSTCLASSICAL

Growth. Christian art tradition, in sculpture, naturally kept its head low; for as members of a proscribed religion, in ancient Rome, and as themselves a scattered and highly diverse set of religious recruits, the early Christians had little connection with sculpture except through the funereal motifs they carved on sarcophagi. This role expanded with the gradual expansion of the church form, which with the growth of the faith required larger structures for the exercise of their worship, and the early Christians proceeded to re adapt the Roman basilica into auditorium-like spaces where proto Church services could gradually be held. (Thus the beginning of a Christian sense of architecture.) Though these structures could well have served as settings for sculptural decoration, the early Christians, abhorring graven images, refused for a long time to take that path. Around the year 600, Pope Gregory declared that mural paintings should be added to churches, as ways to record sacred history, but sculptures were still avoided as graven images.

Charlemagne. Until the time of Charlemagne, in the early ninth century, sculpture was hardly to be found in Christian culture—give or take Celtic crosses with decorative motifs or the first stages of Byzantine painting. Charlemagne, however, established a vigorous art impulse and sponsored the work of many architectural projects, which inevitably, in his successors, the three Ottonian rulers, led to the gradual incorporation of sculptural work into the work of making Christian churches. The opening out of confident Christian culture was at this point awaiting the Crusades, in which Christian conquests in the Holy Land, and the return of holy relics captured in skirmishes along the way, inspired a period of intense church building in the West, where abbots and priors were competing for the talents of sculptors who could help to decorate the churches of the new Romanesque style (1000-1200).

Gothic. Gothic church construction, and the sculptural work called in for decoration and instruction, took its cues from the Romanesque, with its rounded arches and thick walls. Over time the Gothic cathedral soared gradually out into the narrow nave, high thin intricate walls, high-arching spires, and stained glass windows which we know from the cathedrals at Chartres or Notre Dame. The Cathedral was seen as a microcosm of God's creation, and in time, between 1150-1300, became a treasure house of fine sculptural ornamentations, sculptured tales, statues of holy figures surrounded by images of the great Old Testament prophets. The summit of religious sculpture in the West is to be found on the vast cathedrals we owe to the High Gothic period.

RENAISSANCE

Renaissance The early period of Renaissance sculpture was firmly built on the work of the High Gothic period, and reflects the same exuberant historical awareness that had preceded it. If anything, the energy of stone creation is higher than before, and the Renaissance reflects in the greatest names of the early period: Ghiberti, Donatello, and Andrea del Verocchio. The period of High Renaissance Sculpture (1490-1530) was dominated by the work of Michelangelo (1475-1564), painter, sculptor, poet, and supreme genius of the Renaissance.

Baroque. Growing out from the Renaissance, the Baroque period of sculpture (1600-1700), latching onto the strong Roman Catholic Counter Revolution, with its passion to draw people back to the 'true church,' devoted all its skills to charming and delighting the faithful. Saint Peter's Square was redesigned, under the direction of the greatest sculptor of the time, Bernini, so that the columns embracing Saint Peter's himself seemed to embrace the returning worshipper. Bernini's individual pieces of sculpture, like *The Vanquished Gaul killing himself and his Wife*, captured the sculptural moment in a brilliant instantaneity, an effect both stunning and forward looking—toward increasingly illusionistic work to come in the next centuries. The Baroque, still defining as part of the Renaissance perspective, continues to unfold throughout Europe, as the Renaissance spirit, which took first wing out from north Italy, developed into other cultures which like the Italian were finding new directions in which to win friends spiritually.

Rococo. As a reaction against the severity of the baroque, sculptors in France, especially, found their ways to a lighter hearted treatment of painting and sculpture. 1700-1789 marks out the Rococo period, sophisticated and genial, as was the thinking of the court of Louis XIV at Versailles, and readily settling into academic style solutions. Director of the *Académie Française*, from 1707 on, Guillaume Coustou was the most successful sculptor of the early part of this movement, while a variety of court sculptors, many the favorites of the great ladies of the court, held sway in competition with one another. We might say, in retrospect of the Revolution which was just around the corner, that art was having fun for a hundred years before the blood letting.

Reflection. We have been moving fast, from the Neolithic art explosion, 35,000 years ago, through quiet and almost hidden early Christian art, which only gradually—but then unstoppably—outsprang into monumental architecture and highly developed sculptures, both free standing and parts of narrative suites, which were to morph toward the muscular power of Renaissance pluri-genius, culminating, we might say, in the supreme works of Michelangelo's sculpture and painting, only to soften out into Baroque and Rococo stages.

Drivers. This reflection is about the nature of change in art styles. It could be styles of moral value or of domestic architecture: the central question is the same—what is the driver to change? In art historical development it is as though human consciousness initially hooks itself into a project, like that of transforming nature into some of the metaphorical meanings inherent in nature, and then, once engaged in a segment of the challenge—say the challenge to transform the mere coexisting with caves into the depicting of the cave world—from within the cave—the drive of consciousness prosecutes its effort at 'improvement,' at expressing more fully what it feels it is pursuing, until, at some point, the energy of the quest plays itself out, transforming itself, if that is the way to put it, into its replacement, as Renaissance sculpture, for example, replaces High Gothic which has already expressed what it could of the energy supplied it by its culture.

NINETEENTH CENTURY

Doldrums. With the exception of Auguste Rodin, the nineteenth century, in Western Europe, was a low point in the movement forward of sculpture. In part the reasons are embedded in the historical moment. After the Revolution there was much general uncertainty about the chief directions of society. For one thing, the Church had been severely wounded by the Revolution, throughout Western Europe, and without Church support, need, and commissions, an essential support for sculpture was missing. (Sculpture, it was realized when institutional support was absent, was an expensive art, requiring precise tools and equipment, and much personal time investment, and could not, like painting, thrive simply on the inspiration of brilliant household geniuses. It should be added that, in nineteenth century West Europe there was a marked decline in those kinds of large building projects—courthouses, cathedrals, administrative halls—which had theretofore served as launching pads for sculptural commissions.

Rodin. Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) stands out among the European sculptors of the nineteenth century, in power recalling the greatest works of his ideal, Michelangelo. As an independent spirited, and only modestly backed by fans or the wealthy, Rodin held powerfully to his conviction—wasn't it that of Michelangelo, also?—that a tenacious attention to the wonders of the human body was the only path to noble sculpture. (In this conviction he also gave his total allegiance to the spirit of such ancient Greek sculptors as Phidias and Praxiteles, whose muscular sculpted bodies are so 'realistic' they are 'ideals.')

It was in accord with this muscularity that Rodin also worshipped the tightly wrought cathedral sculptures of High Gothic.

TWENTIETH CENTURY

Renovation. It is as if, with the twentieth century, Western European (and American) sculpture finds out how to shed some of its material bulk, and, at the same time, its rather limiting dependence on institutions for commissions. A reconception of sculpture is underway, which will sidestep some of the mass problems that shadowed the traditional sculptor's trade.

Revolution. The 'anthropological' put ups of such sculptors as Constantin Brancusi and Naum Gabo, portable and tactile, often wry, change the weight of the action of sculpture, which becomes less a statement than an offering. Wit is given room to enter the discourse. It might be mentioned, in relation to this turn of lightening in sculpture, that concurrently the *Ecole de Paris*, an influential working crossroads for European sculptors, was actively open to the impact of African sculpture, which was widely on view in earlier twentieth century Paris, and which opened for Western Europeans rare vistas of sculpture as color, humor, and movement.) Such Westerners as would have experienced African sculpture had been readied for such attacks on the expected, by the assaults Picasso and Braque had already undertaken, against all the canons reigning in western European art, at the time when they tossed a truly revolutionary Cubism into the ring of Western European perspectival options. Among those options, seized by many European sculptors, was the path of abstract and super real sculptures, sculptures of breakfast made of fur, mobiles that mocked the traditional weight of the sculptor, or, as in the work of Louise Nevelson, 'assemblages composed of found objects, mostly wood, sprayed in white, black, or gold paint and arranged in box like shelves occupying a wall...'

The horizons. Obvious we have been moving, here, into a horizon unanticipated by the depictive, though very diversely so, prior history of Western European sculpture. We could go on. But the dramatic point makes itself clear before us, that sculpture is only by tradition, not by necessity, limited to the stolid, direct, head on expressions of the human personality. It is clear that what inspires Rodin, in the finest of his work, like 'Balzac' or 'The Thinker,' is a frozen in life—and perfectly and deeply human--representative; it is clear that Naum and Gabo, or the pop art sculptors who follow them, are making artefacts, or letting artefacts form, that will 'make you think.'

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Sculpture was greatly boosted, in the late middle ages, by the need for it expressed by the makers of the High Gothic cathedral. What did those makers want and need from sculpture? Was sculpture needed,

after that point, in its trajectory as a major Western European Art? In modern art is sculpture needed? Or is it a function of dialogue, among observers or among the elements of a sculptural complex? Would Naum and Gabo have any interest in the notion of a 'use' for sculpture?

What do you imagine as the origin of sculpture? Does it seem plausible, that the origin of sculpture might be different from that of painting, or of architecture? Is painting about representation, sculpture about presentation, architecture about occupation?

The earliest Western sculpture we have, from the ancient Mediterranean, then from the caves in Western Europe, is regularly connected with the celebration or promotion of fertility. Do you understand what the act of creating sculptures could have to do with the promotion of fertility?

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ARCHITECTURE

ANCIENT PERIOD

Ancient. Ancient western European sculpture provided us abundant examples, from the Neolithic period, of small figurines evidently connected with fertility. (Large breasts resembling the Helladic sculptures from Neolithic Greece.) Paintings from the caves of southern France and northern Spain, dating to 35,000 B.C., similarly prioritized themes of harvest and fertility, quite naturally concerned with the promotion of the species. Massive architectural complexes, like Gobekli Tepe (in southern Anatolia; ca. 10,000 B.C.) or Stonehenge in central England (3000 B.C.), naturally lead us to suppose that they too have connections with promoting abundance in natural cycles.

Neolithic. We are not sure this is true, of Neolithic architecture. Both Gobekli Tepe, for instance, and Stonehenge have been seen in such light, the former as a pilgrimage site for worship, the latter as a kind of solar observatory intended to align sites on earth with the positions and movements of the planets. All this, in both instances—and in many more instances around the Neolithic world—is pure speculation, inevitable though in view of our natural interest in determining the origins of the development of massive architecture, such a significant and challenging component of Western culture.

POSTCLASSICAL PERIOD

Romanesque. As with all the artistic continuities in Western Europe, the transition from the Neolithic to the post classical is sharp and abrupt. By 313 A.D., when Constantine had helped to convert the Roman Empire to Christianity, there was already a profusion of structures, around Rome, in which the growing (but still suppressed) Christian community had been meeting and unifying itself. With the adoption of Christianity by the Empire, the Church began to take advantage of certain kinds of *basilica*, large structures constructed by the Romans for official business, which could be converted into larger structures for Church purposes, and which—the basilica form—were to become launching pads for the great Byzantine churches like Hagia Sophia. The basilica style, as it developed in western Europe,

evolved slowly, from the sixth to the twelfth centuries, into the Romanesque style, the earliest mature style.

Gothic. By the twelfth century, a new church style—the Gothic, identical to new church building today—had made its way out through the constructive processes of the Romanesque. Flying buttresses, ribbed walls, and vaulted arches became the trademarks of this new style, which was to generate the greatest of the cathedrals, especially in France, and to recommend itself as an essential adornment to every proud city of believers. The greatest of the patrons of these new cathedrals—like the French abbot Suger—were associates of Kings, major historians of their time, and farsighted students of the development of city life. They were precise students of math and geometry, who valued the classical perfections of the finest cathedrals, who foresaw the perspectival and adorational features of the interiors of the finest cathedrals, and spared no detail of attention—consider the pop fascination of gargoyles—in order to assure that their creations displayed the maximum of the vivid struggle of good with evil.

RENAISSANCE

Mysteries. The Renaissance, or rebirth, of Classical Culture introduced a significant revision of the Gothic mode in European architecture. As we explore high gothic cathedrals, like Notre Dame or Chartres, we see that they are all about mysterious spaces, dark naves and nooks, places where the spirit can indulge itself in that sense of mystery which for so many Christians, then as now, was an essential part of the religious experience. When we say that the Renaissance was a turn back to classical sensibility—remember the Parthenon, the Zeus temple at Olympia, the temple at Agrigento in Sicily—we mean in part that the clear and balanced lines of the ancient Greek temple were rediscovered, as were the open and sculptured spaces which were transparent to all in the interior of the Renaissance structure. We talk here, then, of a wide variety of building types—under the category of Renaissance—great Basilicas like St. Peter's (construction begun 1506); palazzi, great homes for noble families like the Medici; elite living quarters for people of high substance in the Catholic hierarchy.

Textbooks. The repercussions of the printing press made themselves felt throughout the Renaissance of architecture. The order and classical discipline we treasure in Renaissance building construction had its roots in texts which were widely studied, and which established models for architecture. In 1562, Giacomo da Vignola published the influential *Canon of the Five Orders of Architecture*, which was a textbook study designed for the use of architects. Vignola, who had worked on St. Peter's and the Palazzo Farnese in Rome, was a practical architect whose book featured how-to-do examples of column and balustrade construction. A second, and even more influential text of the time was Antonio Palladio's *The Four Books of Architecture*, published in 1570. (Palladio was one of the most accomplished practitioners of his time, and his work in the 1550's in Venice, on the churches Il Redentore and San Giorgio Maggiore, establishes Palladio's own principles with stunning clarity.) The windows, doors, and floor plans, on the typical Palladian structure, share an openness, lightness and clarity which forged new directions in architectural history. A particularly well known example, of the rage for the Palladian, was Thomas Jefferson's home in Monticello, based on Palladio's own home, La Rotonda.

18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES: NEOCLASSICISM

Presence. If we review the continuing stream of Western European architecture, we see that by and large what is understood as the classical remains a persistent theme. In the early Renaissance the notion of the classical dominates architectural style, and that because, in Western Europe, the actual presence of Greco-Roman lands and cultures is right beneath your feet. (That depends, of course, on just where you live, but may be possible anywhere in Western Europe, giving the material-ware saturation of an area the size of Western Europe, subject for centuries to Roman and Greek boots and buildings.

Travelers. A decisive turn, within this native classical tradition, in Europe, was given by such factors as developments and discoveries within archeology, by a rage for continental travel, which took Western European art connoisseurs to every corner of Europe—often to places like Southern Italy or Greece—by trade and by commerce, which by the eighteenth century were clogging the Mediterranean—even by

rediscovered ship wrecks, which were beginning to be uncovered from the ocean floor, as often as not laden with massive loads of commercial amphorae, intended for the wine or grain trade.

Neoclassical. The Neoclassical style, as a continuation of the stages of Renaissance style, is manifestly linked to its predecessors, favoring the Palladian styles when it comes to domestic architecture, and leaning toward the Gothic in general slant. The Gothic of 18th and 19th century architecture is not the dark and obscured Gothic of the high middle ages, or of mysteriously dark places hidden away in such structures. The new Gothic we are looking at is if one might so express it, the Palladian Gothic, the sharp outlines and clear paced form Palladio himself proposed. The neoclassical of this New Gothic ramps up constantly, through the eighteenth century in England and France: Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (1776), Herder's *Journal meiner Reise im Jahre 1769* (1769), Goethe's *Italienische Reise* (1786-1788) —all these classics are drawing sharp attention around Europe, as the actuality of such stunningly painted interiors as those of Herculaneum and Pompei burst free of their ash.

Napoleon. In 1806 Napoleon wishes to build a memorial church to his victories, and his immediate thought is of the Greek exemplars he can turn to. In 1806 he turns to his first choice, a version of the ancient Greek Parthenon, and though it morphs in process, eventually becoming La Madeleine, he has found the track of his time. In Edinburgh, in 1822, another Parthenon is started—after all what better inner image to work from—as a memorial to the Scots who have died in the Napoleonic Wars. When it comes to choosing a design for the new British Museum, in 1823, an extended Parthenon is the first model that occurs.

MODERN ARCHITECTURE

Modernity. A brief summary can hardly cover the culture gaps that lead from Neoclassicism, the late Gothic, to the international modernity which had swept over Europe by the early nineteenth century. The best we can do is to let contrast underline the intensity of the transition, throughout western Europe, from a culture working off a classical base to a culture winging it with experiments in all the arts—sculpture, architecture, and painting.

Experimentation. Architecture's version of the Expressionism which moved Western painting was expressed—for example in the *Goetheanum* of Rudolf Steiner (1923)—by the use of new natural materials for construction, and by the incorporation of broad natural forms, often associated with broad socialist agenda. So called Art Déco was taking off in the mid twenties, with its reinforced concrete skyscrapers, vertical lines, and geometrical forms attached to the outside of the structure; buildings like the Art Déco Chrysler Building, in New York City (1930), put such public structures right in the public's eyes, where one hundred and fifty years earlier there would have been a sleek neo gothic cathedral. By the end of the decade of the nineteen thirties—and this indicates how rapidly 'modernist' styles were changing—the Great Depression and the critiques leveled by architects like LeCorbusier, had concluded that Art Déco was far too 'fancy'. This verdict and hinted at the speed with which, in the late thirties, the German Bauhaus movements—Gropius, Mies van der Rohe—was promoting a newly convincing streamlined style of public architecture, the style that marks the wonderful skyline of Chicago.

Philosophies. Some critics, tired of the self-conscious sparseness of Modernism, drifted in the direction of Regionalism—an effort to create historically lodged buildings inside universal settings; to follow Paul Ricoeur's question of 'how to become modern and to return to sources, how to revive an old, dormant civilization, and take part in universal civilization.' (An outstanding ideologue of this quest was Kenneth Frampton, whose 'phenomenological architecture' sought for the philosophical underpinnings of his constructions.)

Frampton. One might say that Frampton was concerned chiefly with reference in architectural structure, and thus came up against the then newest movement to deepen and change the presence of architecture in fast changing urban societies. *Postmodernism*, in the mid twentieth century sense, was broadly concerned with 'wit, ornament, and reference,' in architectural style. With Postmodernism enters the architectural debate about historicism and newness in architecture. On the horizon of this debate lie

movements like New Classicism and New Regionalism, and ultimately—but there is no such thing in architecture—the wide movement of Deconstruction, which counts on careful undermining of classical structures, from within those various structures, and which thus explicitly invokes the collaboration of philosophers, like Jacques Derrida, with architects interested in buildings as works of thought.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

To what do you attribute the long lasting classical tradition in European culture? What was the special power of the Greeks and Romans—in the visual arts—that gave them such lasting influence over later generations, and centuries? What broke that tradition, or what weakened it? Did the classical tradition in literature weaken and break at the same time as that tradition broke in the visual arts? Can we restore that tradition? Do we want to?

In what ways did Christianity use architecture as a means for developing its power? Was the church a means of protection, or fortification, for the long defenceless church? Exactly how did the early church—the structure itself—develop out of the basilica form? What accounts for the different styles that the Christian church assumed in the course of development of Byzantine Art? Where did the Byzantine basilica get its distinctive form?

What was the role of materials in shaping the development of medieval European architecture? Were there new material finds, along the way—new minerals, new processes—which made possible advances in structural architecture? What kind of assisting machineries were employed—say at Notre Dame Cathedral—for heavy and high lifting?

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MUSIC

ANCIENT PERIOD

Once again with music, as earlier with literature or philosophy, we have very little to say about the world of Western Europe, in the centuries (millenia?) which preceded the advent of Christianity and the Fall of Rome. There are early—more than 20,000 years early-- archeological remains of musical instruments, scattered through Europe—and there are portrayals of performing musicians on the walls of caves throughout France and Spain, but since music disappears, after having been aired, there are no remains once it has been aired. Whence, then, this thing called music even came from, will therefore remain among the mysteries of the phenomenon. What spurred the making of this 40,000 year old bone flute from 'France,' of which I am presently looking at a reproduction? Was it the desire to communicate, the need to give a warning, the inherent joy of the production?

POSTCLASSICAL PERIOD

Liturgical chant, emerging from the actions of the mass, was the first impulse to a distinctive music rooted in Christianity. Saint Ambrose collated much of this material in the fourth century A.D.; the majority of the church music popular at the time represented the type of chant practiced in Rome. (Real popular

music? The music of the streets? We're not talking that always human daily buzz, so dealing with what we have, with what survived, we remain with what we know, what had institutional church status to build it. Yet we have ahead of us, not far, plenty of later mediaeval secular song, itself developing concurrently with the liturgical.) For several centuries, the primary growth within this liturgical music came from the invention of *tropes*, musical or textual enrichments, by which the musical material of the mass became more popularly engaging.

Polyphony. Onto the base of liturgical chant the biggest developmental innovation, emerging during the early Middle Ages, was *polyphony*, 'the simultaneous sounding of two or more melodic lines.' With the development of polyphony, as was made clear by the eleventh century Italian monk and theorist, Guido d'Arezzo, one could enjoy such high octane events as two voices singing over and under one another, and at the same time singing two different songs. The next great development, was *Ars Nova*, which sprang in the fourteenth century from the intellectual milieu of the Church of Notre Dame.

Popular music.

By the early twelfth century there was a fully developed secular/popular current in mediaeval music. Especially in France, first among the so-called *goliards*, itinerant clerics and students, then among the more knightly *troubadours*, these dashing individuals—*meistersingers* and *minne*(love) singers in Germany—became a fixed and romantic factor in regions like southern France, where they commingled with poets in a rich literary/musical symbiosis. (Richard Wagner's 19th century opera, *Die Meistersinger von Nuernberg*, deals with the times of this group.) The master of the art-song was the Frenchman, Guillaume de Machaut, who was especially noted for his dexterity in the polyphonic song form of the *motet*.

RENAISSANCE

Cities like Dijon and the court of Burgundy were by the fifteenth century rich centers of musical entertainment—that is essential parts of cultured living among the higher, and more sensitive, aristocracy; generally centers where an acclaimed musical group would take up temporary residence, bringing its instruments with it. It is hard to locate a Renaissance for Western European music history, in the senses in which it applies to a rather distinct period for the history of European painting or literature; and yet the growth of cultural matrices like the two mentioned sites above is so widely spread, throughout the Europe of the late fifteenth century, that we can usefully call this period the Renaissance. It was the foundation for a rapid uptick in secular music—of course the mass-centered music of the High Christian period was no longer hot—with much of singing madrigal, and finally the wonderful new discoveries among instruments, and the ways in which the technology of making new instruments—organ, stringed keyboard instruments—led to the discovery of new musics for the mind to do with those instruments.

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Baroque. The baroque era (1600-1750) introduced a critical turn in musical practice in Western Europe. In short, the system of musical modes, which was based on the eight principal church services of each year, was replaced, as the wear and tear of time and new expressive needs pushed it aside; that mode system found itself replaced by a system of tonality which would shape Western music until at least 1900, a new system based on 'contrasting keys, or sets of interrelated notes and chords deriving from a major or minor scale.'

Opera. Opera, a manifestation both of ancient text, and new tonality, was one of the first dramatic expressions of what we would be most comfortable calling the Renaissance in Western Music, for the opera forged in that period of discovery and risk has remained one of the vivid hallmarks of our entire musical background. The impulse into opera was given by the early seventeenth century Camerata group in Florence. Foremost among the composers close to this group was Monteverdi, who himself wrote two operas—*Orfeo*, 1607; *L'arianna*, 1608—before returning to Venice. The masters of French opera, which characteristically exploited dance sequences and strongly emotional episodes from Greek mythology, were Jean-Baptiste Lully and Jean-Philippe Rameau. England gave the world Henry Purcell, with his *Dido*

and *Aeneas* and other masque-like opera forms. Important to say, in this context, is that other singing and instrumental forms—like the cantata and oratorio—were simultaneously pulling in widening audiences, from among the newly moneyed middle class that was starting to announce itself throughout Europe, in the mid-seventeenth century. The same groups, baptized now into a taste for the new kinds of composition made possible by new kinds of instruments, proved now equally susceptible to those new forms of instrumental composition, the *sonata* and *concerto*, which were beginning to feature in many public venues, and which were to feature as major cultural display cases until our day. Antonio Vivaldi was among the many geniuses of this new form of growingly personal (but infinitely shaded) instrumental entertainment.

Bach and Handel. With these two German composers, each born in 1685 in the same part of Germany, both reared as organists in the Lutheran Church, the brilliance of the baroque became both intense and mature: Handel, because of his training in Italy, went into dramatic works—secular cantatas, opera, oratorio—especially after he moved his life to England; Bach, who was lifelong employed as an organist, by the Lutheran Church, tended to work within those spiritual terms, excelling in ‘passions, cantatas for church services, liturgical organ pieces, and harpsichord compositions, many instructional in purpose.’ This last rider takes us to the mysterious heart of the work of Bach, arguably (the humble editor opines) the climax of Western musical achievement. One might say that the rigor of the originally mediaeval effort to adjust tropes and scrutinize notational values falls, with Bach, into the more advanced tonal system that had developed with the Renaissance, and that had opened the expressive ground for the finest of spiritualities working in the confines of an immaculately precise productive system.

Rococo. The Rococo style, thriving on the increasing richness of instrumental possibilities, and the growing finesse of audience attention, opened out into the eighteenth century with particular aplomb in Germany, where one of Johann Sebastian Bach’s son, Carl Philip Emmanuel, helped to motivate the ‘sentimental style’ movement, within the framework of what was coming to be called Rococo. This style foregrounded the subtle dance impulses coming from France, and the inheritance of Father Bach’s rich spirituality. The German century of genius, out and around this growing rococo tradition, was to bring to full expression the work of German composers who were flourishing by the second half of the eighteenth century; for the first time in western music history instruments, and not human voices, were serving as the main drivers of new work. In the at that time highly favored movement within German musical creativity, we were already familiarizing ourselves with creators like Joseph Hayden, and with the young Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), who (like his literary contemporary, Johann Goethe) was to overlap the classical and the romantic expressions of his time, if not erase the release of time-bonding altogether, in the case of the greatest music.

The symphony. In a music creativity world in which sonatas, trios, piano concertos, and symphonies were the chief attention, the symphony gradually moved to front rank, for social relevance, and availability to deep and complex expression. It was not long before the symphony, in the hands of powerful conductors, and composers like Beethoven, took over the task of representing large cultural waves, and at least aspired to providing a voice for its time. (It was for this kind of claimed grandeur of articulateness that the philosopher Hegel admired the Beethoven symphony as a true historical action.) At the same time the symphony rises to the eighteenth century’s highest level of claim and aspiration, intimate counterpart forms, like that of the originally eighteenth century chamber music quartet, to our day remain a factor in in-house musical entertainment in Europe.

NINETEENTH CENTURY

Romanticism. The Romantic period opens here, though in musical development it is in many ways hard to distinguish from the so-called classical brilliance of the preceding century. With the development of the century three main kinds of musical presentation crept into dominating attention: the symphony orchestra; the piano (which had squeezed out such earlier formative instruments as the clavichord); the solo voice with piano accompaniment. The distinctive new features of performance in the period were length—symphonies lasting typically more than an hour; and ‘instrumental color and variety’, that is to say a great new power of emotional expressiveness. Once again, periodization by centuries is particularly difficult

when it comes to the history of music; and seemingly easier when one approaches the development of the history of literature, where, to stick with our present example, the eighteenth century poetry of Western Europe breaks sharply to be replaced by the Romantic poetry of Wordsworth or Heine or Lamartine.

The opera, with the free range it gives—not for the fulness of historical expression like Beethoven, but for the fulness of individual passion—as we find it in the Romantic heart-builders of Verdi (*La Boheme*; *La Traviata*) and Puccini (*Madame Butterfly*)—the opera becomes a benchmark achievement for the popular passions of the nineteenth century. The operatic achievements of Richard Wagner (1813-1883) in Germany were perhaps representative of the best and the worst developments of nineteenth century music, as they touch on nationalism, the passion of the group, and the power of the Volk to elevate and pervert thought. In works like *Die Meistersinger von Nuernberg*, to which we referred earlier, Wagner takes us back to the cultural texture of the Middle Ages, and for the only time in his creative life writes comedy in music. Nor does he touch the specific issues of German nationalism, for which the Nazis wished to appropriate him, though Wagner was on paper an opponent of Judaism, and in his exaltational tempos, which impels us into the wind, he provides quasi visionary passages of sublime beauty which carry us to the ultimate good or bad of our souls.

THE MODERN PERIOD

Contrasts. With the modern period a great diversity of musical styles wins public favor. The contrast between them can be illustrated by a pairing off the Romantic tone poem composers, Debussy and Ravel, against the atonalists Schoenberg and Stravinsky.

Schoenberg; Stravinsky. Arnold Schoenberg stands out for his adoption of a twelve tone scale, in which all tones of the octave are serialized. The result is instrumental music which to the ear trained on the classical octave, seems harsh and discordant. Stravinsky, daring both in atonal experiments and in unprecedentedly brilliant and dashing collisions of sound and color, is the man whose *Rite of Spring* drove Parisian audiences dashing into the streets—so chromatic and surprising was that operatic work. By contrast with these two experimenters—and allies like Hindemith, Berg, Bartok—there were dream like composers of infinite charm—like Debussy and Ravel—who enchanted audiences with romantic inner poem landscapes. Multiple varying cultural milieux and ever wider choices for instrumentation both contributed to the broad palette of new experiences awaiting the growing musical audience during the first half of the twentieth century.

Johnny. Your son, Johnny, with his ear phones and his smart phone is not likely to be listening to Stravinsky, when his face fills with that distant look. For between the tonalists we cited here, as heralds of the new century, and the world of jazz, bebop, rock, and their innumerable offspring, there runs a gamut of 'modern music,' which is as different from Stravinsky as is the electronic and now digitalized world of our society and culture. Johnny is listening to the echoes of the digital revolution, as they play out in the difference between him and say his granddad, who may still enjoy opera, may even—possibly—enjoy Beethoven or Mozart, but who has no clue, and wants no clue, of the exquisite musical journey that has brought him to where he is.

Discussion questions

What are the big turning points, in the development of the History of Western European music? Would you name the Renaissance, the Barocco, the turn to the atonal, in the twentieth century? Is the developmental line of Western European music similar to that of the dance or literature?

How would you fill in the music-development space that separates Stravinsky from Johnny? From what branches of the Western European musical tree did the themes, individuals, and passages come that shaped a new musical world for Johnny? Were the clashing cymbals of Tupac Shakur's grinding anger forged in the workshops of cities like Detroit rather than in the music hall?

The Church served as central factor in the development of Western European music. At what stage of that development, in your opinion, did the Church begin to surrender its musical hegemony? Does church—mosque, synagogue—figure at all significantly now, in the formation of Western European music?

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DANCE

ANCIENT PERIOD

Prehistory. We must imagine a robust prehistory for the dance as well as for religion and art, in the pre-Christian centuries; in those areas we now call France, Spain, England and Germany. Emphasis is due, here, on the robust, for it is easily enough assumed that those 'wild lands' beyond the Roman frontier were, because without writing, also without fields of art in which to express their emotions. (The simultaneous Roman and Greek cultures, which were so proficient at the language arts, and for whom {especially the Greeks} what could be said or written was the gold standard for depth and value, tend to overshadow the dark pre-Christian ages of West Europe.)

POSTCLASSICAL PERIOD

Erotics. From prehistoric cave paintings, and illustrations of dance, in particular, we assume the artistic sensibility of the Neolithic pre-Europeans who were long term inhabitants of Western Europe. With the decline of the Roman Empire, which set in in the first centuries A.D., and the early Christian struggle toward institutional respectability, then toward such assertively doctrinal power as we see exercised at the Council of Nicaea (325), from those moves in history we assess the gradual disappearance of the prehistoric in Europe, that culture period summoned up for us, in our day, by such evocative novels as William Golding's *Pincher Martin*. We begin to see that an early world, in which dancing styles the Christians were largely to reject, as far too erotic, far too directed to promoting crop fertility instead of the praise of god, was—except among the 'northern heathen tribes'—to be largely purified of its pagan elements. Dance as an expression of the joy of life was on the whole proscribed by the early Christian church, which considered such jubilant dancing the work of the devil.

Two minds. The Christian Church, as it turned out, was of two minds about dancing, an issue which was constantly pressing in the early period of the Church. Apart from the opinions of Saint Augustine, 354-430, who was severely opposed to dancing, there was the opposite view of St. Basil of Caesarea (350 A.D.) who declared that dancing was the most noble activity of the angels, a theory later supported by the Dante of the *Divine Comedy*, a weighty endorsement from a most respected source.

St. Vitus. In the high Middle Ages, itself, there was a prominent kind of dance-- named for a frenzy - afflicted holy man of the third century-- which was accepted by the church for its relevance to social crisis. We are here in the time of the Black Plague, dreadful and unexplained disease outbursts, which itself, is thought to have destroyed a third of the population of Europe. (Popular opinion was that a spider bite was the source of the plague infection, whence the Italian dance name, *tarantella*, has to this day lasted as a

reminder of the terrors behind it.) This holy/damned dance would express itself in masses of victims leaping and jumping in the air, with mouths foaming, and eyes red with epileptic terror.

High Middle Ages. In the high Middle Ages, shall we say in the time of Dante and Chaucer, the kinds of dance taking over Western Europe were of three kinds, corresponding to the three chief social classes of the time: the nobility, the clergy, the peasantry. The clergy—with undoubted exceptions-- as can be imagined, were chiefly involved in stately processional dances, employed around the holy mass. (In African Catholic Churches of our day, the group dances at the time of 'Harvest,' circle colorfully around the nave of the church.). Among the nobles, the knights, there was already a courtly tradition of formal dancing, full of the poetry of restrained love, while among the peasantry dancing meant the round dances, often full of cavorting high jinks, erotic horseplay, and uninhibited sport. The kind of social free for all, on the peasant level, we see depicted in the paintings of Breughel!

EARLY MODERN PERIOD

Dancing masters. We often think of the Renaissance as the rebirth of awareness of the ancient classics, which is part of the story. But in subtle ways the Middle Ages, too, became parts of the Renaissance. By the end of the Middle Ages—say the early fifteenth century—the jongleurs of the mediaeval period, who were men of all skills where entertainment was wanted, as dancers, jokesters, stealers, cut ups—think of Jof in Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*—these jongleurs were morphing into a new profession, needed from them by the new dance-loving and often quite secular-erotic Italian noblemen, who were ready to employ. This was the profession of dancing master, which will be influential throughout the development of Western European dance history. Throughout the fifteenth century many of these dancing masters, who were often highly educated, wrote manuals on the art of dancing—exercises to improve the dance skills of the nobility. Many of these instructors, incidentally, were Jewish, and brought with them, into Western culture, what we could call the harmonies of today's klezmer band music.

France and England. While Italy was the leading force in Renaissance dance development, there were separate and rich traditions developing in France, where from the simple *branle*, a country round dance, there emerged versions of the ballet, and of the pantomime—instance: a dinner ballet, featuring the story of Jason and the Golden Fleece, was performed at the wedding of the Duke of Milan, in 1489. In England the peasant tradition of bumptious round dances was persistent, while the court showed a thorough understanding of European dance styles, to which they hewed in grand masques or royal festivals. Queen Elizabeth I was an enthusiast for English country dance, and was gifted at dancing the galliard and the volt, leaping country dances in which the two dance partners clung tightly to each other. It was not long, be it said, until France itself opened the new direction for dance, the ballet, in courtly performances, often including the Royal Majesties, danced to the celebration of its own harmony, and of the harmony for which France—then torn apart by civil wars—had great need.

Ballet, as it happened, was a rich point of departure for the development of dance in Western Europe. Slipping into the seventeenth century we find that not only ballet, but house-party entertainments, and show-off occasions for debutantes were all surrounded by the display of dance. It was in this environment that Moliere's dancing master mocks himself, when addressing M. Jourdain, in *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670):

There is nothing so necessary to human beings as the dance...Without the dance a man would not be able to do anything...All the misfortunes of man, all the baleful reverses with which histories are filled, the blunders of politicians and the failures of great leaders, all this is the result of not knowing how to dance...

Minuet was the dance form most ready to follow the preparations laid for it by the country dances of England and France, by pantomimes such as flourished at the courts of England and France, by great balls and festivals in the courts of the Italian nobility during the Renaissance. The minuet, a gentle-stepped position-exchange among the powerful and elegant; what could better have typified the stability of the old order, a stability toward which the court dancing of the fifteenth century was a prelude; what

could more fatefully have symptomized the Falling of the old Social Political Order, which was to be manifest in Western Europe by the end of the eighteenth century?

NINETEENTH CENTURY

Waltz. While its origins antedated the 19th century, the growing and soon overwhelming popularity of the waltz, an originally German dance form, rooted in *the Sturm und Drang* cultural energies of late 18th century Germany, opened a turn toward the future, the individual, and the cultures of nascent democracy, which were profiling themselves across the backdrop of 19th century Western Europe. The waltz, a one on one dance involving freedom, character, and expressiveness, all the characteristics implicitly sought by the Romantic Movement, and the French Revolution, which had turned its back on the rigid formalisms of court dance, spread into the 19th century in all directions, populist and noble alike, to the greatest extent possible exemplifying that power of the dance form which Werther expressed, in Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther* (1779):

Never have I moved so lightly. I was no longer a human being. To hold the most adorable creature in my arms and fly around with her like the wind, so that everything around us fades away.

Ballet. Latent as a growth direction throughout the pre-revolutionary era, was the ballet form, which, as we have seen, had its origins in court, yet spread from there into popular entertainment. Schools of ballet sprang up in all major capitols, and spokesman scholars of ballet—like Jean-Georges Noverre, an influential reformer and scholar of the ballet movement—competed with one another, throughout western Europe, for the prestige of the ballet companies which they themselves led. Among the dancers of the Romantic ballet scene, ballerinas imperceptibly took over as principals, having been better instructed and better equipped—looser garments, open toed slippers—than their male counterparts. Voila the origins of the ballet *prima donna*. During the first half of the nineteenth century there was a rage for 'spiritual' and filmy ballets, like *La Sylphide* (1836) which biopsied the crossing over points between the spiritual and the real worlds.

Theater and ballroom. The hunger for public entertainment grew in the second half of the nineteenth century, beginning to manifest itself in the dancing in ballroom halls and theaters. For a while it was female can shows with their much enjoyed displays of legs and genitals. Then, as public culture grew ever more in your face, there were minstrel shows, music hall reviews—Jacques Offenbach's *Gaieté Parisienne* was not staged until 1938, but think how vividly it summons up the atmosphere of nineteenth century music hall life, and of the pleasure loving (and wan) girls who sought that life, in the paintings of Toulouse-Lautrec.

TWENTIETH CENTURY

Ballet, immense and popular, was the strongest of the art forms to address the western dance public, at the outset of the 20th century. Many of the fresh impulses renovating Western ballet were Russian. The influx of dances and dancers from Diaghilev's Ballets Russes were felt most stunningly on the Paris stage, from where they spread throughout the continent, giving Western European ballet a glimpse of such transcendent dancing as that of Nijinsky, or directing on the level of that of Michel Fokine (1880-1942). (Interestingly enough the dancers of the Ballets Russes never performed in Russia, where they were seen as worse than bourgeois.)

Jazz. As the twentieth century unfolded, Latin-American and Jazz dances, imported from Afro-American and African cultures, and passing often through Spain, whose native culture was receptive, entered into the European dance world. That world was already opening out from inside into such civilized, and calmly bourgeois pleasures as tango teas, dance clubs, family style dance holidays. The English Style of dancing, as it came to be called, sanctioned five standard dances, which would be the hits of the first half of the century: quick step, waltz, foxtrot, tango and blues. My Mt. Vernon Iowa, U.S.A., neighbor, Dale—and his wife, Eileen—are my age; their chief recreation is trying to figure out how to handle these steps at dance night uptown every Friday. I can't hold a candle to them; scary octogenarians.

Folklore. The urbanization of major European cities, the invasion of radio and eventually television, into the sphere of the man on the street's musical life; all these factors militated against the traditions of folkdance which were rapidly enough fading in the Europe ripped from its roots by two World Wars. There were pockets of historical resistance, throwbacks reminding us of the old world—Basque country, Hungary—but soon (like right now) they had little left except to be 'picturesque.'

Academia. Interestingly enough, although there is much more to say about the explosions in dance theater, ballet ensembles, and intercontinental blending of ballet companies, bringing to the hometown in Europe strands of another and usually fascinating performance culture, it is less observed that in University cultures, from one point in Europe to another, there have been hitherto little noticed experiments, researches, and historical inquiries into the nature and history of dance that 'Departments of Dance' have become broadly staffed and innovative origin points for new understandings of dance in our lives. Does the work carried on in those centers suggest the kind of pause for rethink, of the nature of the Humanities, that the Enlightenment century offered to the European cultural conscience in general?

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Discussion Questions

Is dance, par excellence, the art that requires a public audience's attention, in order to realize itself? Can you dance with yourself? I know I am suggesting that this is impossible, but cannot we not, taking wings from the Werther we cited above, 'sing internally?' What, after all, is given to the dancer by the public, as a reward for displaying himself.

Does dancing reflect the historical moment in which it occurs? Or is it more a byproduct of changing and regressing styles, which interweave with one another? The waltz, we might say, has 'something to do with the

Romantic movement.' But what does the Minuet have to do, as a dance form, with the French court? If we do see a certain 'having to do with' relation, should we say that the dance style influences the expression of its moment, or is influenced by that moment?

Is dancing one of the 'high arts'—that is, does it carry the same degree of 'spiritual weight' we might attribute to fine literature, painting, or even music? Or is the corporeal of dancing a downdrag in it, which keeps dancing from serving as our highest level of expression?

THEATRE

ANCIENT PERIOD

Frontier. Once again we imagine Western Europe, the western frontier of the Roman Empire, to have been barren of literary culture in pre-Christian times, and we can go farther and doubt that there were even non-theatrical performances at the time on the western frontier—it being possible, always, that a non-writing, even non-verbal dramatic tradition could establish itself. Therefore in looking for the origins of western European drama we will need to begin with the dramatic actions of the early Christian Church, as

it gradually replaced the declining Roman Empire. We may thus start by reminding ourselves that for the fourth century St. Augustine, one of the culture giants for the values of the early Christian world, the stage was a home of vice and wickedness, and the practice of simulating others' moods and behaviors an inherently wasteful use of the mind. Thus even in the new theater world, Roman theater as it was experienced by the first Christian intellectuals, there was resistance to the notion of the theatrical.

MEDIAEVAL

Division. Two totally diverse forms of theatrical life emerge from the largely empty record of the first five centuries. The Byzantine Empire, in its center, Constantinople, sported two theaters, at which, according to slight surviving evidence, comedies, dances, and tragedies were performed to enthusiastic audiences. (The same, here and there in pre-decline Rome, was to be found, for there the great work of Plautus and Terence continued to live sporadically among the scattered intelligentsia.) The other form of theatrical life known to us from western Europe is itinerant bands of performers of skits or rural plays, of which we know nothing textual now, except that the Church considered them pagan and dangerous.

Church. Already early in the mediaeval period, churches in Europe had begun staging small plays illustrating biblical topics; these plays were performed in connection with the church calendar, and increasingly were coordinated with events in the drama the mass unfolded. Using for stage properties many of the appurtenances of the mass—censers, altars, vestments—the makers of these small dramas developed their own kind of liturgical pre drama, the first written and recorded being *Whom do you seek?*, an Easter trope—see entry on music in Western Europe—composed around 925. By the tenth century formal dramatic work had set in, centered as the surviving work all is, around Church festivals and the appurtenances of the mass. The first vivid theatrical creator was Hroswitha (935-973), a northern German canoness, who wrote six plays modelled on the comedies of Terence, the earliest master of Latin drama. They are the first known plays written by a female dramatist, and the first truly recognizable plays of the Western postclassical period.

High Middle Ages. By the high middle ages liturgical theater—focused on the practice and theology of the Catholic mass—was springing up around every major worship center in western Europe. One byproduct of these theatrical dramas was the Feast of Fool thematic, in which comic episodes would be set aside in which the lesser clergy could mock their pompous seniors, and even the way—though never the substance of the way--the seniors dealt with the mass. It cannot have been long, given this turn to internal critique, that performances of religious plays outside the church began to crop up. Smaller playlets were joined to larger, and before long substantial small plays, still of course built out of Christian thematics, were omnipresent in western Europe.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there was an increase in the number of religious plays performed outside the church, and frequently in the correspondingly growing number of towns in which people could gather for entertainment. A number of twelfth century plays remain, like *The Mystery of Adam* (1150) or a variety of contemporary plays in French, plays on *The Resurrection* or *The Three Magi*.

Cycles. In the following two and a half centuries, to the brink of the Renaissance, there was rapid development of towns, new political structures, intercity and even international trade, and with this growth there was a corresponding growth of mystery plays and morality plays, the former often staged in the form of play-cycles (The York cycle, 48 plays); (The Chester cycle, 24 plays); the Wakefield cycle, 32 plays)—to pick only examples from the British Isles, while the fact was that such large scale dramatic creations were springing up throughout Europe ;at a festival drama cycle in Valenciennes France (1547) for instance, seventy two actors, mostly local, performed in more than one hundred roles. The diversity of roles increasingly included, as we will not be surprised to know, thoroughly secular role intruders—villains, clowns, devils—lest we forget that this drama was on its way to eventual transformation into the secular powers of Renaissance English drama.

The secular. Secular dramatic performances gradually grew up throughout Europe. Many of these 'plays,' like *The Play of the Greenwood* (1276) by Adam de la Halle, were full of satirical scenes, ghosts, and fairies, clearly cutting a path into the real/imaginary world lived by the peasant on the street. Satirical

plays were created throughout the continent after the thirteenth century—usually directing their barbs at the corrupt and comical in or out of the church. The best known of these satirists is the German Hans Sachs (1494-1576), to whom we are indebted for 198 satire-plays.

Actors. As the drama gradually passed away from its dependence on the church, professional actors appeared performing both in England and across the channel. The end of the strictly mediaeval period of drama history, in Europe, was approaching, with the decline in the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, with the Protestant Reformation, and in fact—from the mid sixteenth century on-- with the banning of religious theater in many countries.

RENAISSANCE

Commedia dell' arte. From 1575 on, originating in Italy, the *Commedia dell'arte* was a loosely organized actor-centered kind of theatrical movement, which made its way across Europe—let's say a far more urban and sophisticated folk theater move than that of the fairly disorganized and folksy bands of jongleurs and comedians who had for centuries provided a base level of entertainment for country Europeans. The *commedia* plays utilized stock characters—the *lover*, the *master*, the *servant*—involving a cast of thirteen or fourteen, who took a share of the company's profits—whose fortunes and slapstick misfortunes became stock material for 'the masses' in the following centuries, and who remain til today reminders of the great comedic traditions of Plautus.

Playhouses. Building on many native theatrical traditions, and meeting entertainment needs in the more cohesive and sophisticated cities, 'companies of players'—or equivalents in other countries than Britain—were formed, attached to the households of leading aristocrats—as inhouse performers. So much appreciated were these relatively proficient actors, something new, that the older acting groups, were banned and labelled 'vagabonds.' In this case the special patronage of the Queen, Elizabeth I, was important in supporting the new acting companies. Theaters sprang up in the suburbs of major cities, from London to Paris. The popularity of this new form of entertainment—after all we're talking about Elizabethan drama in England, and one of the world's most creative stage moments—was high throughout the sixteenth century. It was a period during which Shakespeare and Marlowe, to name only two of many brilliant writers, showed how to be both a popular dramatist and a complex, erudite, and potently imaginative playwright, touching the farthest limits of human thought in speech. It was a period of seeming incandescent power but it ran out into the roadblock of the Puritan Revolution, and of the powerful contempt of Charles I for anything like public entertainment; in 1642, at the outbreak of the English Civil War, the performance of all plays was banned within the city of London.

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Restoration. With the end of the Civil War (1642-1651) the Restoration Theater—Congreve and Wycherley will spring to mind—was ready to make its own of the thriving British theater of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At that point-- the greatest period of truly people-based, genius-led, widely ranging theater in British history comes to a sliding transition. But it is at that point that we need to step back, for there is no limiting ourselves to the story in England.

Spain and France—whose theatrical greatneses belong to the same brilliant rush of discovery which had bowled us over when we discovered Shakespeare, Marlowe, or Kyd—were deploying their theatrical mastery at the same time that the British were creating a new dramatic world around the Globe Theater, in the sixteenth century. In France, Moliere, (1622-1673), Corneille (1606-1684), and Racine (1639-1699); in Spain Lope de Vega (1562-1635) and Calderon de la Barca (1600-1681): both sets of names reference powerful theatrical minds which share with Shakespeare their intrepid grasp of the whole strange human adventure, and do so in poetic language which is at the same intertwined with the rough hewn street base of the writer's language. Never before, since ancient Athenian audiences gathered In outside theaters for awe of their great tragedians, has civic culture aligned so deeply with artistic power.

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Bourgeoisie. The middle class began to replace the aristocracy—which was itself declining as a social force—and to require entertainment that reflected its own values. Hundreds of new theaters were built across Europe at this time--Milan's La Scala opera house, completed in 1778, provided room for more than 2000 spectators--and in lieu of great dramatists there was a fervent theatrical industry, with acting companies, distinguished actors, and various kinds of popular spectacle, to meet the leading requirements of the time. Spectacles—what were called 'English opera'--were immensely popular, and enthralled audiences with their carnivalesque showmanship, magic tricks, flying actors and fireworks; the Disneyesque crowd pleasers of the eighteenth century stage throughout Europe.

Audiences. (Many audiences—higher in class and education—who had sucked in their breath at the elegance, or the careful irony, of Moliere, were now content with the *drame bourgeois* of Diderot the encyclopédiste, the sharp edged satirical dramas of Voltaire, or the tearful, and ultimately feel-good comedies of Colley Cibber in England. What may have fallen short in inherent artistic power, on the eighteenth century stage, was compensated by the great acting of geniuses like David Garrick, the greatest of interpreters of Shakespeare, who became Manager of the Drury Lane Theater in London, setting as he did demanding new standards for stagecraft and décor—and, in a move typical of the time, clearing the spectators off the stage, as Voltaire had also done in France.

Sturm und Drang. Achievements were boiling on the German stage where the *Sturm und Drang* movement was taking the sentimental turn of French and English drama into far deeper and nobler perspectives, frequently harking back to the Greek foundations, and making the verse theater of such as Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller into masterpieces of world theater.

NINETEENTH CENTURY

Feeling. The distinguished *Sturm und Drang* movement in Germany, which straddled the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, brought to the European theater a new stress on *Empfindsamkeit*, feeling or sensibility, as well as on the new elements of melodrama, which had entered the western theatrical scene with Kotzebue's *Misanthropy and Repentance* (1789). In Germany, especially, there was a move toward new realism and accuracy in historical stage settings and costumes. As the century—not the greatest for either drama or theater—wound on, two kinds of taste began to make their claims, and to speak for distinct publics: these were the claims of realism, the attempt to reestablish on stage the mood and actual properties of another historical moment, and, on the other hands, the taste for symbolism and expressionism—which were just beginning to acquire their voices

Self-awareness. While actual staging practices, for example those promoted by Georg II, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, brought increasing historical fidelity to staging, and laid the groundwork for Wagner's highly dramatic scenographies of Teutonic scenes of love and war, another kind of realism, that of Henrik Ibsen in Norway, made for a major addition to work theatrics. In the twenty five plays he wrote at the end of the century, he covered the realities of marital break up, personal disintegration, shame, gross ambition, cynicism, and did so in a way that captured not only the fascination of the new middle class, but its developing sense of self-awareness. Toward the end of the century, a number of other urbane playwrights, some British, showed the middle class how to laugh at the unstable pendulum of the human condition.

TWENTIETH CENTURY

Change. Twentieth century rebellions in stagecraft, and in the very conception of what theater is, remind us that the 'performing arts' dimension of western drama has, until the twentieth century, and throughout such vivid changes as that from High Mediaeval to Renaissance theater, based itself on a fairly stable concept of what a theater is: a centrally focused tableau for representations of narrative action—no different from what the earliest Greek playwrights presented to their avid audiences. By the twentieth century, in Western Europe, it was clearly time to reconsider this ancient notion of stage and performer; in the poetic dramas of Yeats and the later Ibsen, for instance, there was already abundant evidence of the readiness for change in stage, narration, and acting. We move into an era, starting in the late nineteenth century, in which new techniques of stagecraft, hostility to theatrical realism, and

directorial inventiveness have started to remake the theater. In a twentieth century risking all on the battlefield, opening up and revaluing all its social assumptions, and inventing a technological framework for its self-image, it is no wonder that the performance arts of theater reflected the new world creating them.

Stagecraft. Daring new stage designers—the Swiss Adolph Appia, the British Edward Gordon Craig—led the way into a new theatrical aesthetic: according to Craig's *Art of the Theater* (1905) 'the stage director alone would be responsible for harmonizing every aspect of the production—acting, music, colour, movement, design, make up, and lighting...' The path was henceforth open for a wave of new conceptions of stage and what occurs on it. In what turns out to be the century of the director—as far as the theater is concerned—we see a succession of brilliant experiments: Max Reinhardt's sense of the open theater, which led him to stage some of his finest Berlin work out in the air, in circus lots or empty urban spaces; the openness of Italian Futurism, in which Pirandello could reclaim existential mystery for the very thing a play is, and the stage itself, among some of its directors, could become a playground for acrobatics; Erwin Piscator's expressionist theater in Germany (1920's), with its use of expensive machinery like escalators and moving stairways, or cantilever bridges moved up and down; the new (mid-century) French theaters which surrounded the audience on three sides. This is not to say that the century that created Beckett and Brecht, Pirandello and Shaw, was all about technique, but that the European theatrical tradition had settled down to review and revise some of its major characteristics.

Discussion questions

What seem to you the fundamental differences between Ancient Greek theater and that of theater in the European tradition? Why do twentieth century playwrights in Europe still often return to classical drama for their inspiration or take off point? Is historical precedent an important driver for theatrical creation?

What about the twentieth century made it a natural zone for theatrical experimentation? Was there any comparable experimentation in the transition from Mediaeval to Renaissance drama? Or was that a cultural transition point which was in itself a massive experiment in change, from religious drama to Marlowe and Kyd?

How do you distinguish the words *drama*, and *theater*, and do those words seem to you to point to two quite different human developments? Is there a common root to both these developments? Is there some fundamental 'performing and narrating' impulse in human nature? Would it serve some of the purposes of evolutionary biology?

Suggested readings

Benedetti, Jean, *The Art of the Actor*, London, 2005.

Duffy, Eamon, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580*, New Haven, 1992.

Gurr, Andrew, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*, Cambridge, 1992.

Hume, Robert, *The Development of English drama in the late seventeenth century*, Oxford, 1976.

McCullough, Christopher, ed., *Theater and Europe (1957-1996)*, New York, 1998.

Williams, Raymond, *Modern Tragedy*, London, 1966.