

From Rococo to Revolution

The Eighteenth century was a time of change...big change...

With the dissolution of the church as a unifying power, the empowerment of the nobility as a closed class – you had to be born noble, and the skyrocketing advancement of a wealthy middle class, a number of interesting developments spread across society.

In order to understand what happened in the late 1700s, the late 18th century, you have to remember where you're coming from.

- Fall of Rome – Europe thrown into chaos
- Out of chaos, practicality prevails – feudalism
- Feudalism turns into monarchy-nobility closed system
- The church supports the monarchy system – best of all possible worlds
- The nobility have power and security and luxuriate in it.

The flashpoint as the seventeenth century rolled into the eighteenth century was France.

Louis XIV

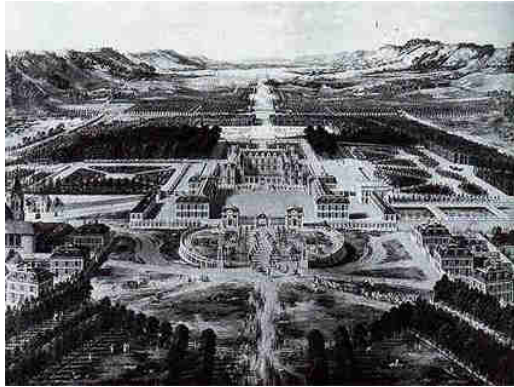


Rigaud

The French monarchy had become a bloated, self-important monster. Working within the system, the nobility and monarchy had become assured that they were nobility, above others because they had been born that way, blessed by God. This trend had been gradually increasing for almost a century, and the fact that the nobility had a fairly small gene pool and the monarchy had an even smaller one didn't help matters.

These monarchs were frequently well educated, and wanted to make wise decisions for their people. They considered themselves **enlightened despots** and did their best to rule according to what their schoolbooks and advisors told them. Some of them were good, some of them were stupid or selfish and just inherited their position, and some of them didn't really understand what real life was like.

Throughout Europe, but most notably in France, the nobility had become increasingly divorced from the rest of the society. They played at intrigues and political games, and the monarch spent as much time managing his court as his country. At the height of this interplay, Louis XIV came to the throne of France. A powerful and intelligent man, Louis was nonetheless incredibly self-absorbed and separated from his people.



Versailles



Louis understood the danger of court intrigues and the danger of letting members of his court get too much power. He knew he needed to shake up his court. And he had been through a street riot aimed at his father when he was a child, and he wanted to get away from the little people who were so violent and disturbed him.

To that end, he headed to the edges of Paris and decided to establish a new, orderly, royal city that would serve as his new capital. He commissioned his architect and landscaper (Le Vau & Le Brun) to create the new city and issued a royal decree that anyone willing to build a house according to Louis specifications could have free land in the city.

This city was centered around Louis XIV's palace and the city actually took the same name as the palace – Versailles



Versailles was an enormous complex, designed to house the king and his entire court. The palace itself was enormous and lavishly decorated. The ceilings were all painted, the edges of the walls were all covered in gold, and the columns and floors were all marble.

Outside, the palace was surrounded in lavish gardens, with elaborate fountains and lakes on which Louis could have miniature ship battles staged.

The palace of Versailles is mind-boggling even by today's standards.

It took over 20 years to build

Its gardens contain more than 300 statues and 1400 fountains

In Louis' day, to run the garden fountains required over 1 million 6 hundred thousand gallons per hour



The palace itself comprises over 700 rooms, more than 2000 windows, 1250 chimneys, 67 staircases and 19,768 acres of grounds. Additionally, Louis and his wife had little “private houses” or miniature palaces build on the grounds as private retreats.

Many spectacular elements were incorporated into Versailles, many of them centered around Louis XIV’s perception of himself as the Sun King. Likening himself to the god Apollo, Louis was obsessed with the sun and its symbolism. He always had himself sculpted or painted as Apollo and organized the entirety of Versailles to highlight his association with the sun.

Perhaps the greatest example of Louis’ obsession is the hallway outside his rooms.



Louis made sure that the hallway through which he would walk on his way to his morning activities (Louis was obsessed with time and doing exactly the same activities at exactly the same times each day) had a series of windows facing east to let in the morning light.

Opposite those 17 windows, Louis had local craftsman create 17 enormous arches of mirrors to reflect the light. He positioned these mirrors and windows along a hallway 239.5 feet in length, and filled the hallway with golden and crystal candelabras and crystal chandeliers.

That way, when he walked out on his way to breakfast, the Sun King came through a hallway of breathtaking opulence bathed in the light of the morning sun.



The hall of mirrors at Versailles remains a wonder of richness, style, and design. The treaty that ended World War I was signed in this hallway, amidst the grandeur of an era almost 200 years before.



The nobility of this era were obsessed with pleasures and games – they liked pretty, playful things. Marie Antoinette actually had a special little village created for herself in the gardens of Versailles where she could go and pretend to be a shepherdess.

One of the “pretty” things created for the nobility was an elaborate design style known as Rocaille. Rocaille embellishments were used in architecture and landscaping, but they were originally inspired by, and painted on seashells. These elaborate little seashell designs, so intricate and so utterly pointless, inspired the name for the art of this time period. The art created by and for the disconnected nobility of Europe became known as Rococo.

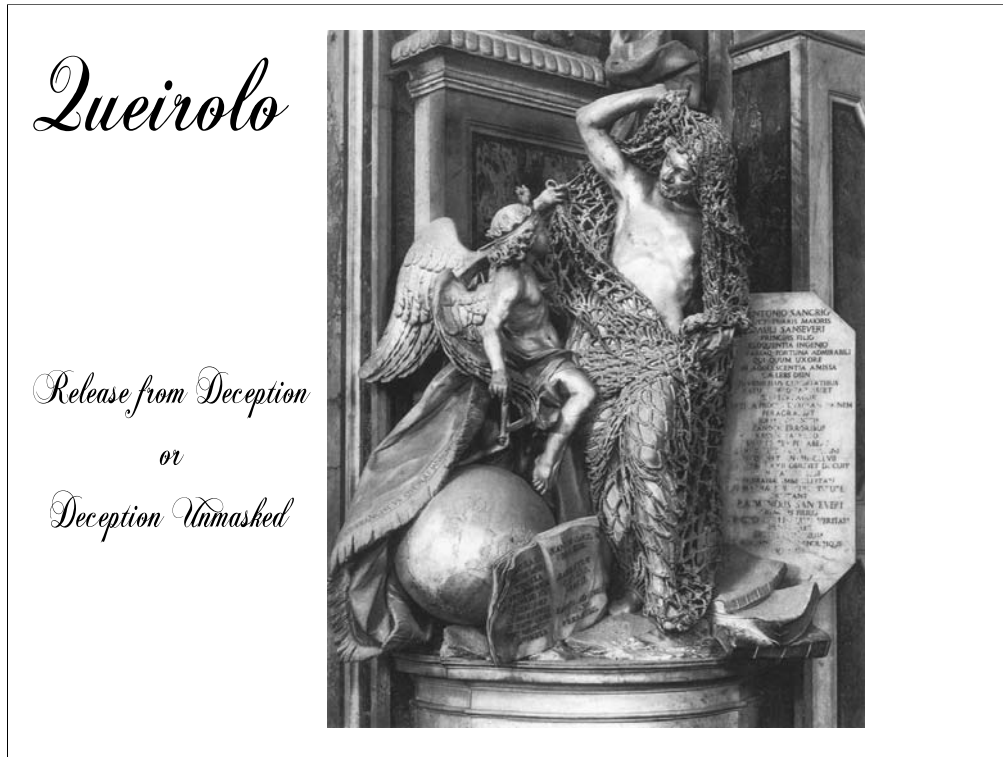
Rococo art is

- Elaborate, sometimes overwhelming
- Decorated to the teeth, usually for the sole purpose of showing off the artist's talents
- Idealistic, unrealistic
- Focused on the innocent and the sensual



Verzeihenheiligen

For example, to illustrate the Rococo style, look at the pilgrimage church known as the Verzeihenheiligen. **Pg 421** The decoration of the entire church has the rococo color palate – delicate, pastels, nothing too serious. It is also decorated in an extremely elaborate style designed more to show off the talents of the decorators and designers.



The Rococo Style is also exemplified by a little statue by Francesco Queirollo. Created as part of a chapel known as the Sansevero Chapel in Naples, the statue was commissioned by Raimondo di Sangro, Prince of Sansevero as part of a bizarre structure filled with elaborate statuary (Raimondo was more than a little strange himself, judging by his reputation at the time.)

The Release from Deception shows a man's escape from the snares of error. It is, in fact, a self-portrait of the sculptor, as he is being helped from a net of cords by his own intellect, shown in the guise of a winged boy; the intellect points at the world, the source of deception, with a scepter.

The impressive thing about the statue that marks it as baroque is the fact that it is all carved from one block of marble – including the net. Again, Queirollo has created a statue more about elaborate decoration and showing off than about any religious theme.



The perception of the nobility of the world as a lovely playground is clearly visible in Rococo art. Take, for example, Watteau's painting *Voyage to Cythera*.

Cythera was, according to tradition, one of the two possible landing spots for Venus' half-shell. Therefore, groups of young nobility would make pilgrimages to the island for lovely picnics, worshipping love.

Watteau's painting portrays one of those groups as they prepare to leave the island. The painting displays all of the characteristics for which Watteau is known. It uses a delicate, almost washed-out palette, figures positioned for grace rather than comfort, and a unique, slightly artificial texture.



Watteau used an overhanging haze of warm colors mixed with delicate areas of color to find a balance between detail and overall “feeling.” His painting manages to capture the pleasant sorrow or wistfulness combined with elegance and pleasure which was so popular during the Rococo period.

Boucher



*Cupid
a
Captive*

Following Watteau came Boucher. Later critics have described Boucher's paintings rather unkindly as mounds of pink, puffy flesh. At the very least, Boucher was most interested in focusing on the playful, pleasurable aspects of life and mythology. Boucher sets off the pile of pink flesh in the foreground of his painting with the green leafy background, creating a strongly geometric painting which remains softened by its colors and subject matter.

*Haymaker and
Sleeping Girl*



Thomas Gainsborough

Thomas Gainsborough, although painting in England, still shows the overall attitude exemplified by the upper classes. In his painting, *Haymaker and Sleeping Girl*, he paints an idealized scene that shows the perception of the upper class, not the reality of every day life for the common folks.

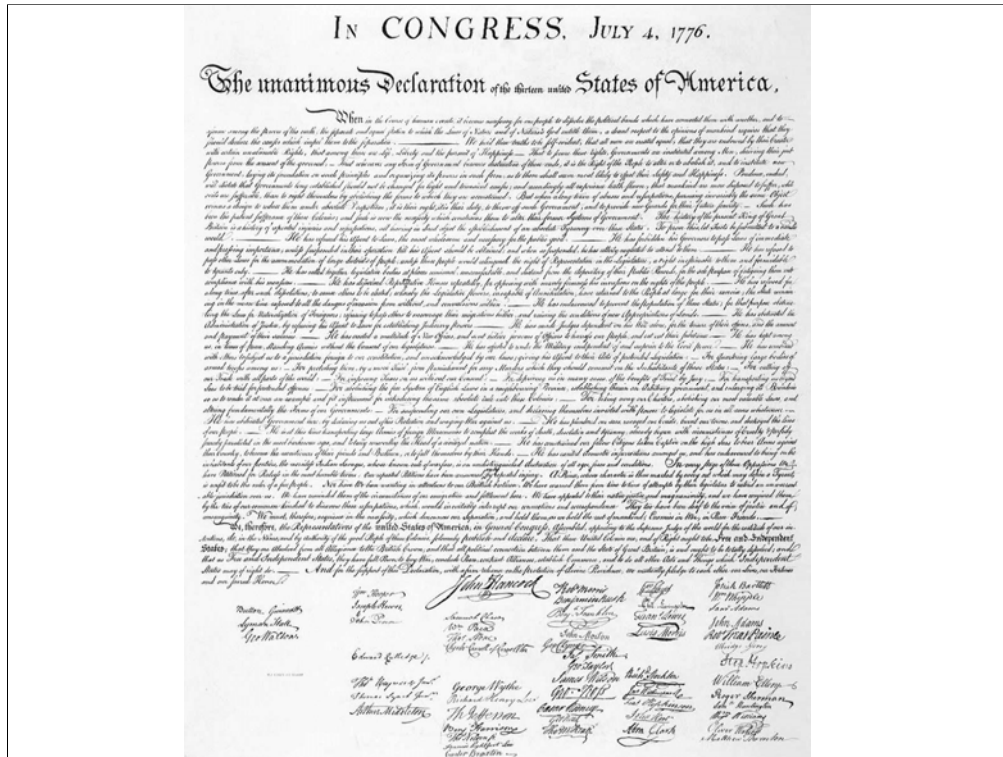
Gainsborough's painting reflects the same china-doll delicacy of Watteau, but adds an interesting twist. Instead of wealthy young lovers or pink goddesses, Gainsborough paints the poor classes. In reality, most of the folks at the level of society portrayed by Gainsborough were scraping for a living, raggedy and none too happy. Gainsborough, however, shows them through the eyes of the nobility as delicate figures at rest. His painting, while pretty to look at shows the rotten core of nobility's perceptions.



Another great change had taken place during hundred years or so immediately before this period of time – the major powers of Europe had expanded across the ocean into the new world. Spain and England in particular had been aggressive in colonizing this new area across the ocean. Not only did these colonies provide them with goods and services they would not have been able to otherwise obtain, they also allowed the countries of Europe to get rid of the malcontents and the hardheads who might have caused trouble within the system.

Many of the folks living in these colonies were of a certain type. They liked doing things their own way. They brought with them the traditions of their home countries, and then did their best to improve on them and settle them into this new country.

And then, in America, something extraordinary happened. England, the mother country of the main part of the North American colonies imposed a number of taxes on the colonies. The taxes were perfectly reasonable to the English, they were taxing trade and resources. But the taxes were the last straw in a long-standing feeling in the colonies that England was bullying them and taking advantage.



Something remarkable happened. No one knows exactly why – some historians suggest that it was because the population was small enough – but the idea that the best people should actually “come to the top” worked. A group of intelligent, capable men came together and put the ideas of Locke into practice and America was born.

America came into being under the ideas of John Locke, and under the philosophy of the Neo-Classicalists. The founders of America were trying to go back to the ideals of Rome, the ideals of the Republic, and they set up all of the architecture and art that goes with it. They wanted to re-create all of the best aspects of Rome, and that desire showed up strongly in the art and architecture they created.

Washington as Zeus



Take, for example, the way they pictured their leaders. George Washington, general and first president of the country was pictured as the God Zeus. (a depiction that many of the “common folks” thought was funny – they said he was reaching for his clothes.

But the point of what the sculptor was trying to do remains the same – he was echoing the glory that was the Classical world, trying to draw connecting lines between what was and what is. That movement, not only glorifying the ancient world, but trying to revive the best aspects of it, was known as Neo-Classicism (the new classical).



Richmond - State Capital

That sense of the neo-classical is also visible in the state capitol of Virginia at Richmond (1785). The capital building is reminiscent of the buildings in the forum of ancient Rome. In trying to build a new republic, the Americans looked back to the greatest empire in history in its greatest time. They looked back to the republic of Rome with its elegant, functional architecture and its focus on country and family and they did their best to take the good parts of that empire and combine them with the enlightenment of a new era.



The capitol itself was designed by Thomas Jefferson and its design and proportions were actually modeled after the temples of Athens. Jefferson worked with a French architect to design the building using the “perfect proportion” favored by the Greeks, and used Ionic columns on the front of the building.



Diderot

Meanwhile, back in France...

The enlightenment was going strong. Enlightenment = the increasing respect for learning and sharing of information. The idea of looking at the world as a rational place governed by natural rules and a natural order was becoming increasingly popular and catching on with a vengeance. In France, many of the lesser nobility were becoming minor-league philosophers (they called themselves philosophes). They began to consider the same ideas that Hobbes and Locke had worked upon and tried to apply them to their own society.

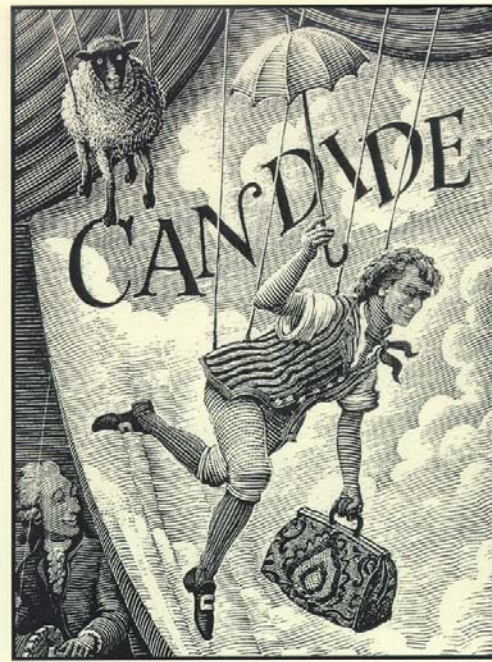
Among these Philosophes was Denis Diderot. A minor noble and intellectual, Diderot's great claim to fame is that he was the editor for the first encyclopedia. A group of intellectuals in France had decided that there should be a vast compilation of information, covering the arts and sciences. They came together and wrote an array of articles on every subject they could think of, including general information and a little bit of editorial opinion as well. Diderot put the whole thing together, editing 28 of the 35 eventual volumes of the encyclopedie.



Voltaire

Voltaire was perhaps the greatest and most influential of the thinkers and writers in France during the mid-1700s. Starting from a young man while working as a paralegal, Voltaire wrote satires and satirical plays. He saw clearly the problems with government and the hypocrisies of the upper class, the church, and the ignorance of the lower classes. Voltaire's writings were widely published and because his ideas were formulated in catchy formats such as plays and poems, they spread quickly and easily.

Voltaire spent much of his life on the run, moving to England, the HRE, and around France. His writings, both in their satire of the way things are and their suggestions of the way things should be influenced many men who were growing up or coming of age during his later life.



Among Voltaire's works, one of the best known is a novel he wrote in 1759 called *Candide*. *Candide* is a farce – a silly Monty Python kind of series of events, but in the ridiculous series of events, Voltaire makes a very powerful point about the state of society in his time.

The story of the play centers around Candide, the young, innocent hero type and his tutor Dr. Pangloss. Candide starts out fairly comfortably situated as the ward of a wealthy family, but his life goes downhill from there. In a series of unbelievably unlucky events, he is thrown out of his home, separated from his true love, conscripted into the military, and accused by the Inquisition. Each time, the events are caused or exacerbated by Candide's stupidity and his belief, reinforced over and over again by Dr. Pangloss that he should look upon all things as a part of his learning experience because we live in the best of all possible worlds – all things are as they were meant to be.

The play ends up with Candide and his love (now ugly and blind) reunited and the cast dancing and singing about cultivating your own garden – looking after your own interests instead of simply trusting in fate and divine providence to take care of you and doing nothing yourself.



Rousseau

If Voltaire worked in terms of satire and tried for social change by poking fun of the way things are, Rousseau spent a great deal of time and ink discussing how things ought to be.

Rousseau proposed the exact opposite of what Hobbes had said – he said that human beings were naturally good. In his view, human beings were originally solitary creatures living in nature without a sense of selfishness or greed. Rousseau said that greed and competition were ideas brought about by human beings being forced to live close to one another – society. Rousseau believed that society and the lessons it teaches – particularly the ideas of individualism and the focus on academic rather than experiential learning.

Rousseau believed that the best structure for society was a government ruled by the general will of the people – he did NOT want a republic, a representative government, but a system in which the general majority made all decisions.

Writing about education, Rousseau emphasized his ideals – he wanted children to be educated out in the country, away from the evils of the city and of society. Educated through experience, out in the beauty of nature, Rousseau believed that children would be free of selfishness and be willing to submit to the will of the majority for the greater good.



These ideals, coming out of the enlightenment – the focus on education, human nature, and the structure of society which challenged the idea of a predestined order – combined with other forces in French society to produce an incredibly volatile mindset.

At this point, several elements were working together:

1. The nobility was completely divorced from the common people; they were busy playing their own games of intrigue and spending tax money like water.
2. The merchant class was growing frustrated. They were the wealthiest people in society, but they could never get the prestige and privileges of the nobility. The only way to be “noble” was through marriage, and the unfairness of the system was beginning to chafe.
3. The philosophes were spreading new ideas about the way society should be structured, challenging the idea that people had to stay in the class where they were born.
4. Food was scarce, war was stripping France dry, people were starving and their starvation was making them angry.
5. Cartoons and pamphlets were being printed by the local presses. Many of the people were at least basically literate, and the ideas of the rights of the people and the unfairness of the government were being circulated.

All of those things worked together to create a powder keg and, in 1789, as many of the merchants and intellectuals who spoke for “the people” were put into the prison in the center of Paris – the Bastille – things exploded. The mob attacked, and the French Revolution was born.



Danton



Robespierre

The French Revolution is a complicated and complex subject, but its course can be summarized by looking at 2 of its central figures. The first is Danton. A large man with a hearty laugh, an easy manner, and a love for physical pleasures, Danton was one of the first “men of the people” to be active in the Revolution. As the people of Paris, and then the people of France, rejected the monarchy, set up a representative assembly, and challenged the “way things had always been,” Danton was at the center of the action. He knew how to wheel and deal, pull strings, and charm people into seeing things his way.

As the assembly gained power and adopted Dr. Guillotin’s “Humane” invention the Guillotine, however, the philosophy of the assembly changed. Robespierre was one of the newcomers to the assembly. Slender and obsessively clean and organized (no, really, he was obsessive), Robespierre wanted to make the French republic as pure as his laundry. And he had no problem with shedding blood to do it.

Robespierre was not alone by a long shot, but he symbolized the mindset of many of the folks who came to power as the French Revolution came along. The French revolution was founded in idealism and it grew into fanaticism. It had great ideals, but it didn’t know how to put them into practice. It was fighting an already-established mindset and it failed, bloodily.



The idealism of the French revolution is visible in its art. Like the revolution in America, the French looked back to ancient Rome, tapping into the neoclassical movement.

Jacques Louis David, the single most outstanding (and long lived) artist of the French Revolution began as an employee of the king. One of the paintings, painted during this early time period actually ended up being the flagship painting for the Revolutionaries.

The Oath of the Horatii depicts a dramatic scene from Roman history. The three men at the left are the chosen champions of Rome, and in the painting they swear an oath to win the battle for their city or to die in battle. The focus is on those three men, emphasizing the ideals of patriotism and loyalty to one's nation. The weeping wives and children, although important enough to be painted on the right of the image, are not the central focus of the canvas.

The painting became a flashpoint for the revolutionaries – the idea of fighting for the freedom and glory of one's own country became increasingly important in the French mind – the common people had a sense of being invested in their country's future.



David like to work at a very large scale. The Oath of the Horatii is 14 feet long and almost 11 feet high. Furthermore, David was often commissioned to make 2 copies of the same work of art for different locations.

How did he work on something that big and keep it in perspective? How did he make multiple copies of the same work and remember what he did? His sketches show how. David worked on graph paper. He sketched out portions of his image on a grid. The grid allowed him both to easily increase the scale of the sketch and to keep track of what details belonged in which section of the painting.

Death of Marat



David survived the fall of the monarchy and the transition into the revolution. In fact, he became a good friend of Robespierre and the “purists” who eventually took over the reins of revolution and moved it into the reign of terror.

Among those radicals was a man named Marat. A difficult, if brilliant little man, Marat was basically motivated to criticize those in power – whoever they were. Virulently critical against the monarchy, Marat was forced into hiding and spent the rest of his life living in basements, closets, and occasionally the sewers. When the revolution took place, Marat continued to criticize those in charge – and stayed in his basements.

In those dark, damp places, Marat contracted a nasty, painful skin disease (no one has yet exactly diagnosed what it was), which he could only ease by sitting in a warm bathtub. One evening while sitting in the tub, a young woman showed up to tell Marat about a plot against the government. He let her in, she gave him a location, a list of names, and stabbed him through the heart.

David painted Marat's death in a highly dramatic way. Making references to Michelangelo's *Pieta*, David's painting shows Marat's limp form in his bath, dramatically draped over the side, his pen still in his fingers. The image became one of the rallying points for the revolution.



As the French Revolution became the French Republic became the Reign of terror, and gradually dissolved into the French Ruin, a young man from a newly conquered Italian island came into the French military. Napoleon Bonaparte was a small man with an enormous ego and a vicious inferiority complex.

Napoleon entered the French military at a time when France found herself in more than a little trouble. The glorious revolution had turned into the reign of terror, and the national council had become a group of men holding onto power merely by the strength of their grip. Other nations, surrounding France, saw the weakened country as a conquest waiting to happen and began to make military moves at the borders of France. Napoleon was a military commander with a natural sense of innovation and adventure. He was brilliant – able to come up with new, creative military strategies – and courageous – willing to put them into practice. He won several decisive victories for France, and was brought to Paris, where he quickly showed that he was as good at politics as he was at military conquest. Napoleon moved into the center of government and stabilized France by making it an empire – with himself as emperor.

Napoleon did introduce a number of excellent reforms, including a code of laws much more practical and specific than anything the council had put into place. He was, however, still a dictator who held control of his country through military strength.

David was still around, still on the “right side” and still painting. His **Napoleon Crossing the Alps** remains one of the best known images of Napoleon. The figure is caught in a dramatic moment of action, with swirling cloak and mane, and the entire painting is organized on a diagonal axis, implying motion and drawing the viewer upward and forward.

Pauline Bonaparte Borgese as Venus



Another sculptor appears on the scene in the time of Bonaparte, a master named Antonio Canova. Among his sculptures is an portrait of Napoleon's older sister Pauline Bonaparte Borgese. Pauline has gone down in history as one of the most beautiful women of all time, charming men even when she was a little girl by the beauty of her features and her eyes. As a grown up she was said to have "the manners of a kitten and the morals of a cat." She was, however, the only member of Napoleon's family to remain loyal to him through all of his troubles.

Canova's depiction of her as Venus was scandalous at the time. Artists did use nude female models, but ladies of nobility did **not** pose nude. Pauline did. Canova's sculpture shows an apple in her hand, evoking the story of the trial of Paris. The statue's base, and elegant neoclassical couch, was originally designed to hide an elaborate mechanism which allowed the upper portrait to rotate so that it might be seen from all angles.



The statue was originally displayed by candlelight, so that its wax surface would catch the light gently, transforming Pauline from a beautiful woman to a goddess of antiquity.

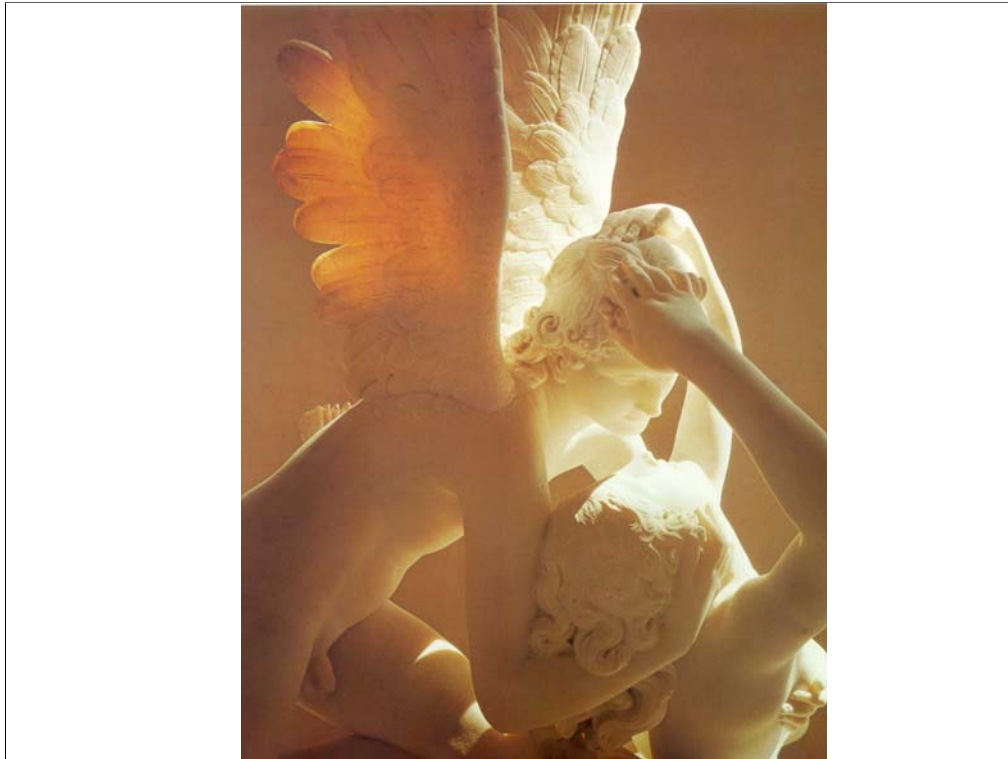
The statue clearly displays Canova's ability with marble. Like Michelangelo before him, he had an ability to make the heavy stone seem light and ethereal. He planned his lighting and his open spaces carefully, making the statue seem natural and lighter than its true massive weight.

Canova –
Cupid and
Psyche



That lightness is most obvious in Canova's Cupid and Psyche. Canova immortalizes the lovers in marble, capturing them in a moment of passion, perhaps in the moment when Psyche first awakes.

The composition of the piece is open, airy, and seems to defy balance. The marble itself is frequently thin enough that light will glow through it.



A follower of the neoclassical school, Canova pushed the classical elements to their furthest extent, incorporating elements of the baroque. Cupid and Psyche are clasped in their embrace, their gazes defining the cage-like space around their faces, yet their physical poses embrace the space around the statue.



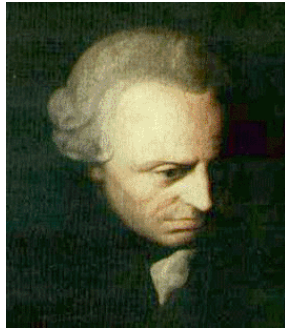
Mozart



In music during the late eighteenth century, only one name stands out – that of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. A genius, Mozart's brilliance in both playing and composing was apparent by the time he was 4 or 5 years old. His father took Mozart and his sister on a tour of Europe believing that exhibiting Mozart's "God-given" talent was the moral thing to do – and a good thing for his finances as well. Mozart charmed the kings and queens of Europe, writing his first symphony at the age of 6.

From there on, Mozart's career was a roller coaster ride. His phenomenal talent was unquestionable, but he was a little strange himself. Socially, Mozart was always 10 years old, and despite moments of great maturity and genius, he never really "Grew up."

Mozart's music remains some of the greatest ever written. His mathematical precision and his ability to produce extremely different musical types and styles is amazing. Additionally, Mozart wrote music without trial and error. His musical transcriptions have no erase marks. Mozart could compose in his head – not just for one instrument, but for a whole orchestra – and write down the piece without hesitation, just as he "heard" it in his head.



Kant

1724-1804

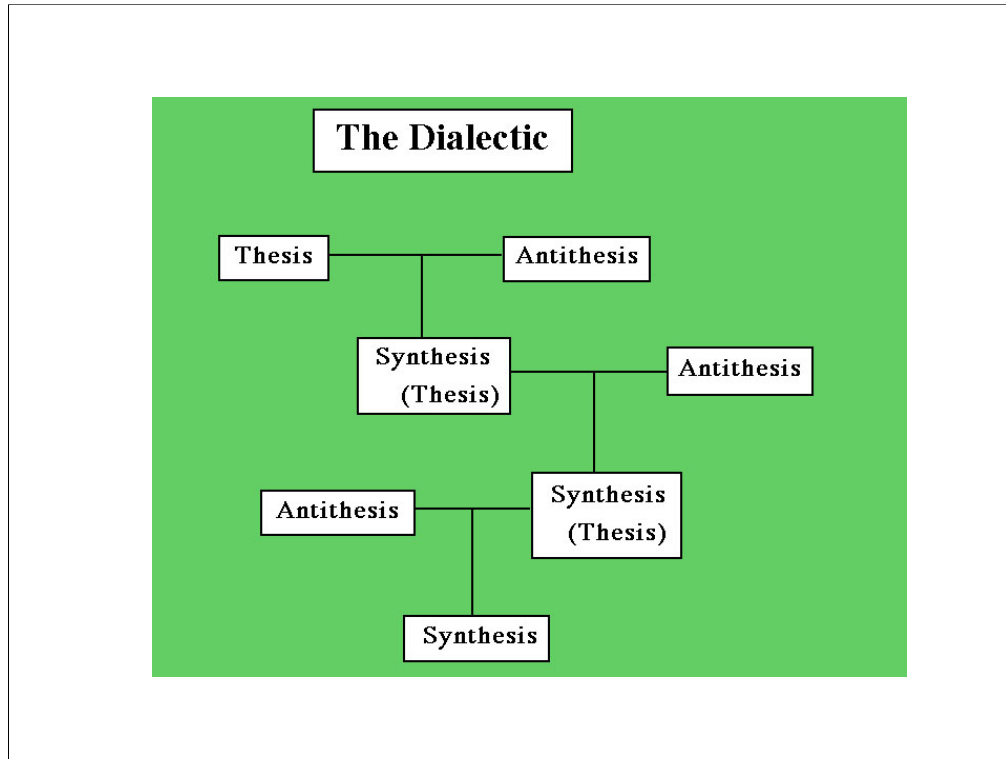
Transcendental Idealism – all a matter of perspective. Whenever we experience something, we experience it for ourselves. The object is real and independent, but to understand it, we must “corrupt” it by experiencing it and filtering it for personal cognition.

The mind and all knowledge comes through integration of information through the mind and its defined categories.

Kant posits universal moral laws, and defines “good” as the choice of the individual will to subjugate itself to and obey those universal moral laws.



Hegel was fascinated with the philosophy of philosophy. He studied other philosophers and political theorists, and in his studies, one thing seemed to stand out above all the rest – the contradictions or tensions between concepts. For example, freedom and authority, knowledge and faith, society and nature. Therefore, Hegel devoted his philosophy to taking these contradictions and creating a reasoned or rational unity from them.



Hegel proposed taking ideas and forging them into a unity through the medieval process of dialectic, not unlike what Peter Abelard had used centuries before. Hegel, however, suggested a much wider application of the theory and introduced new terminology...

Thesis – an idea or concept under consideration

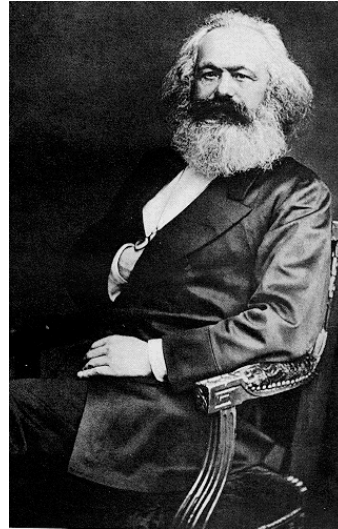
Antithesis– the opposite of the original idea, or a disagreeing theory

Synthesis– a reasoned composite of the two ideas, brought into harmony or unity.

The synthesis then becomes a new thesis and so on until, in Hegel's thought, an overall synthesis of human thought and experience might be reached.

Marx

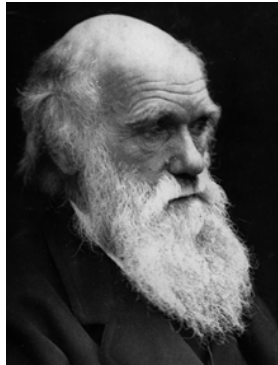
1818-1883



Among the most influential thinkers as the nineteenth century began to get underway was Karl Marx. Born to a wealthy, intellectual family, Marx was exposed to a variety of intellectuals throughout his childhood.

Taking the ideas of Hegel's dialectic to heart, Marx affirmed that all of history is a result of clashing groups and ideologies. Furthermore, Marx said that the primary motivating tension in history is between those who "have" and those who "have not." For Marx, people are divided into classes based on what resources they can access. He believed that the worst thing that could be done to people was that the results of their labor, the things they produced were seen as independent.

Marx said that ultimately, the lower classes, whom he called the proletariat would grow tired of being disrespected and rise up against the upper classes. For Marx the Hegelian synthesis between the haves and have-nots was a communal living system where all people shared evenly in the work and in the benefits of the work. This system, which Marx and his co-philosopher Engels termed "communism" would prevent anyone from being exploited – the cost of items would be directly related to the labor costs. No one would make a profit and all classes would be treated equally. Once people saw what a good system communism was, it would spread across the globe naturally as a synthesis of ideologies.



Darwin

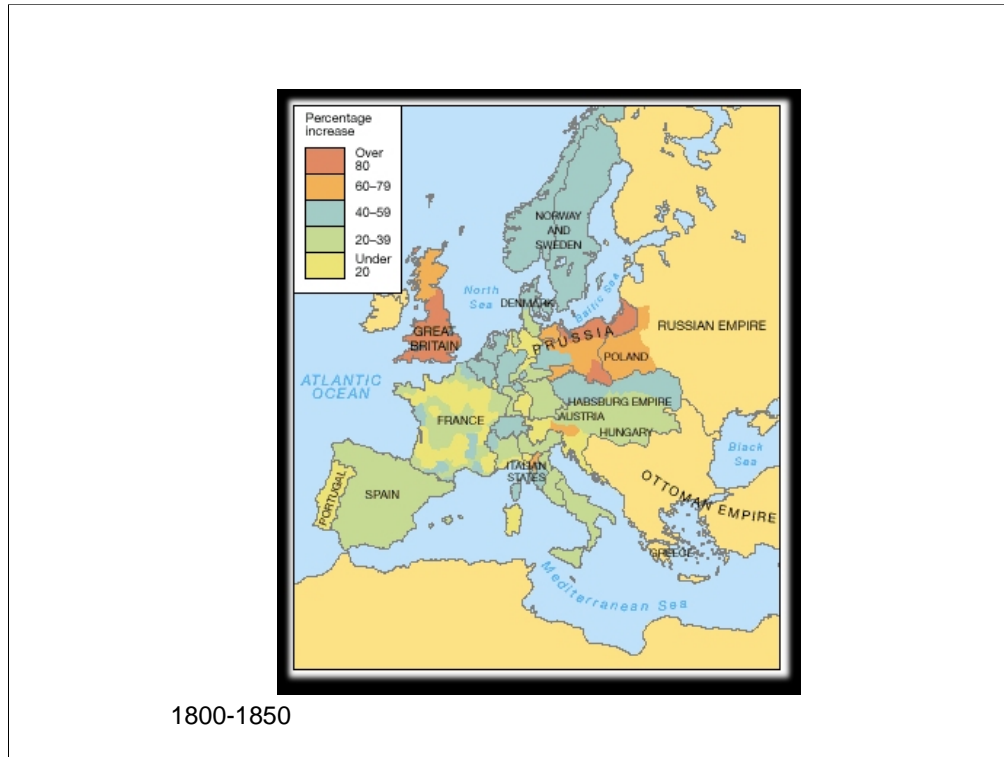
1809-1882

On the side of science rather than philosophy was Charles Darwin, a scientist with a love of adventure, Darwin set sail aboard the HMS Beagle. On his five year journey across the globe, Darwin visited the Galapagos island chain. On those isolated shores, Darwin observed a series of interesting adaptations. Many of the species he observed on different islands or in different regions had adapted to their environment. The same kinds of animals were found in different areas, but they had radically different characteristics depending on what they needed to survive.

Darwin wrote his famous book the Origin of the Species taking the adaptations he had observed and positing a theory based upon them. Having seen the adapted animals in the Galapagos and the skeletons of ancient dinosaurs, Darwin proposed that since animals could change so dramatically to survive, perhaps all animals were the result of such changes. Darwin proposed that a single animal or organism could adapt itself to its needs to the extent that it would actually completely change its nature or become another species. Darwin suggested that the origin of man could be found in this evolution or adaptation between species.

Darwin's theory presented, for the first time, a non-religious alternative answer to how man came to be on the planet. It caught on and gained popularity (in spite of the fact that Darwin himself disavowed it in his late life).

- Fit in with "scientific" thought
- Freed man from morality and the idea of relationship to God
- Allowed man to claim ultimate superiority
- Fit in with the notions of man as inherently good and at his best in the natural world/ natural state.



Along with the view of man's place in the universe, another much more pragmatic change was taking place across Europe. The population was exploding. Dramatically reduced by the plague, the population of Europe had gradually been increasing as the knowledge of medicine and science improved and plague decreased. Now, as the first part of the nineteenth century arrived, the population increased dramatically.

As it increased, something else happened – a new revolution came about. The industrial revolution. Whereas everything before had been made by an individual craftsman, created by hand, the factory and the assembly line were invented. For the first time, the cities were more than just locations for merchants and craftsmen – they were residences for thousands of workers seeking something better.

- More jobs created w/ chance for advancement
- Goods less expensive and more accessible
- Powerful economy
- Child labor/ abuse
- Depersonalization
- No human rights/ respect

Romantic Poets



This industrialization, combined with the new ideas about human nature spawned a backlash, a reaction to all of the science and technology that was spreading throughout culture as the plague had spread 400 years before. That backlash was known as the romantic movement.

- Nothing to do with “love” - instead a return to Rome (beauty and nature)
- Focus on nature
- Focus on emotion, the imagination, and the supernatural.

In the British Isles, the strongest manifestation of the Romantic movement was in poetry. A group of poets, many of them fans of the French revolution, wrote about personal freedom, about a semi-sentient nature, and about the noble savage.

Goya



Execution of the Madrillenos on May 3, 1808

In Spain, the Romantic movement manifested itself in the visual arts with a focus on the noble heroism of the common man standing up against the state and defending the “natural” state of man – the independence and freedom of the individual.

In Execution of the Madrillenos, Goya is painting an incident which occurred under the rule of Napoleon. The Spanish troops had attacked and killed a number of Napoleon’s soldiers the day before. In retaliation, Napoleon had a “token” number of civilians executed. Goya’s painting expresses the horrors of war vividly and dramatically.

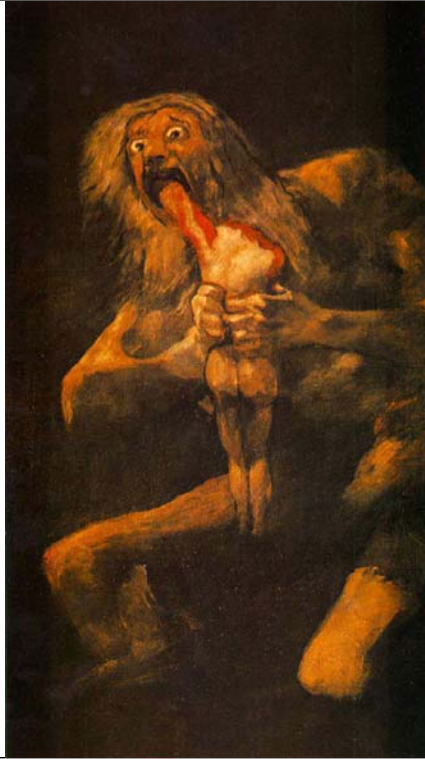
- Focus created via color & focal point lines
- Dramatic gesture reminiscent of crucifixion
- Dramatic use of light
- Faces/ no faces



The Family of Charles IV

Goya's romantic view of society is also visible in his portrait of the family of Charles IV. Instead of painting an elegant, glorified royal portrait of the type traditional, Goya painted the Royal family as they really were – inbred and ugly. Certainly, they have rich clothes and proud poses, but his portrait is anything but flattering. His depiction has been called by critics “the grocer and his family have just won the lottery.”

- Las Meninas reference



Saturn Devouring One
of His Sons

As a Romantic painter, Goya also produced a number of canvases going back to Roman mythology and legend. In the romantic tradition of the bizarre, supernatural, and nightmarish, Goya chose to depict one of the nastier scenes of Roman myth – Saturn, father of the gods, eating one of his offspring. The painting was reflective of Goya's "black moods" – times when he felt that humanity was hopeless. Painted for his own home, Saturn Devouring One of His Sons is a gruesome reminder that time (Saturn = Chronos) gets us all in the end.

Gericault

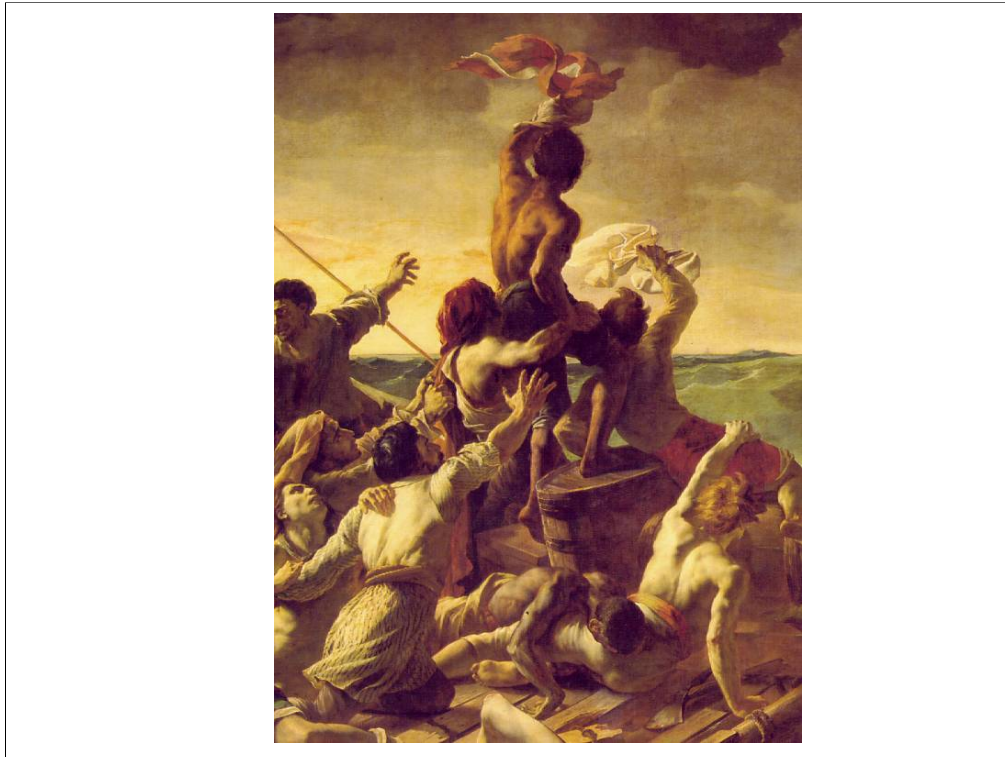


Raft of the Medusa

Although Gericault studied the work of David, he chose to take his art in a different direction. Returning to the dramatic lighting and “caught in a moment” images of the Baroque, he created huge canvases that focus on a dramatic moment rather than on a particular hero or famous figure.

Critics consider his masterpiece to be the Raft of the Medusa. The image depicts the survivors of the French ship Medusa which had foundered off the west coast of Africa.

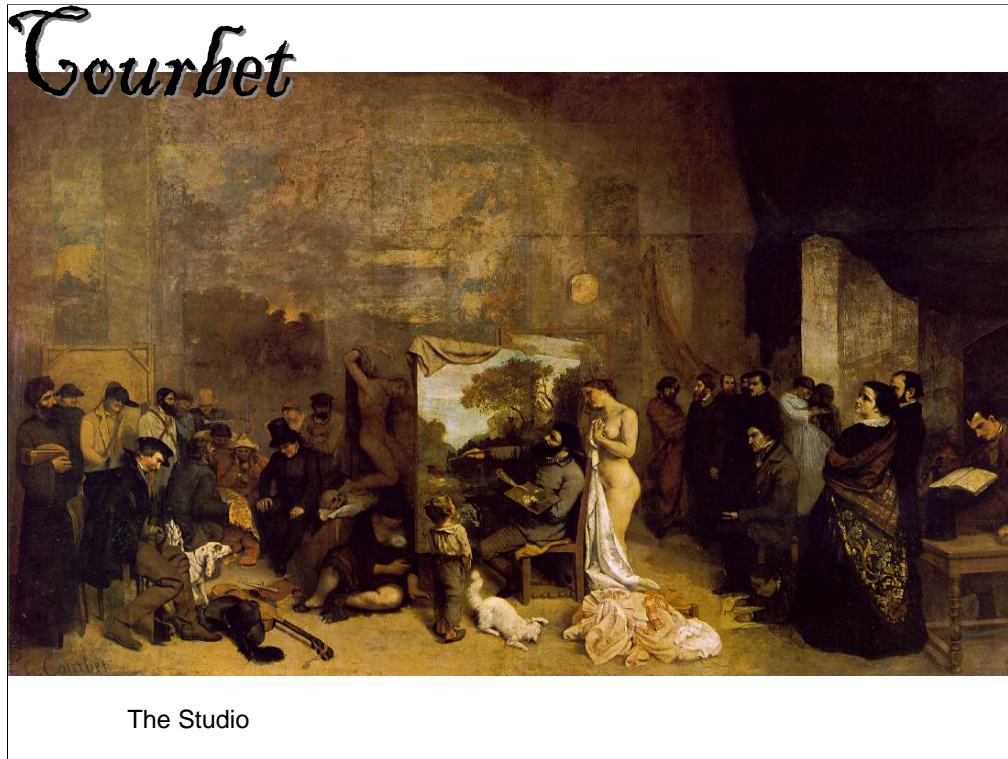
- X-shaped composition
- Pyramid of hope
- Actually interviewed the survivors – hunger for accuracy



The raft is filled with detail

Shows influence of Michelangelo and Caravaggio

Figures caught in a moment or a detail



Gustav Courbet went in a different direction than either the neoclassicists or the romantics. He went for realism. Expressing the firm belief that the artist was to paint what he knew, Courbet was interested in creating large canvases full of life and “real” events.

In *The Studio*, he painted his own studio, perhaps not as it appeared at any one moment, but as a location filled with life and action.

- central focus created by light and color
- Individualized people and poses
- Variety of people included in the image – cross section of society
- Landscape painting on easel

Friedrich



Cloister Graveyard in the snow

George Friedrich, painting in the north in what would be Germany, introduces the strongest strain of Romantic painting.

With the new focus on nature as the cradle of humanity, Romantic painters became more and more interested in portraying nature as the central focus of their paintings. Gone were the earlier canvases packed with people or focused around a single important religious or political figure. Instead, the canvases are filled with dramatic landscapes. For the Romantic painters, landscapes were characters. Romantics saw nature as having a temperament and a personality, just like an individual. Because of that, their landscapes have a dramatic sensibility, a “mood” to them. In the world of the Romantic painter, people are an afterthought, a transient element in the perpetuity of nature.

Friederich creates a sense of stillness and purity in his Cloister Graveyard in the snow. The ruin of the cathedral is the center point, but it is its ruined state, combined with the woodland frame that make it memorable. In the center left, a procession of monks trails into the ruined building, but they are dwarfed by the trees and the ruin, their black shapes blending in with the gravestones.

- Stolen by the Nazis

Constable



Hay Wain

John Constable, unlike Friederich, was not as interested in the Romantic drama of the landscape as he was in its scientific reality and in creating a sense that all living things were a part of nature.

Like the other Romantic painters, Constable was interested in focusing on landscape as a character in the painting. His greatest mastery is considered to be in his ability to create visual texture – in making natural elements look the way they really would to the eye.

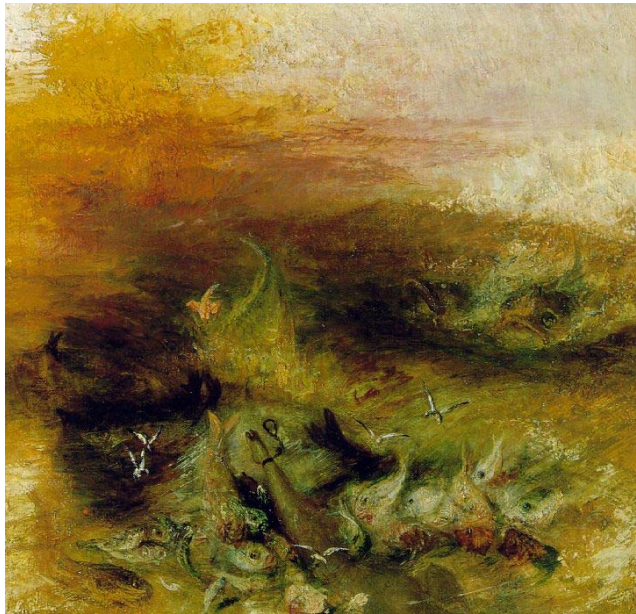
Constable's work reflects a growing concern as the nineteenth century moved onward – Constable was very concerned with science and with visual accuracy. Photography was becoming more and more prevalent and painters were feeling a new pressure to create “realistic” images that did everything that a picture could and then exceeded the grainy black and white of a photographic image.



Turner shows a different aspect of Romantic landscapes. Like Friedrich, he takes the emotional character of a landscape and focuses his painting on conveying that emotional impact.

In the Slave ship, actually titled *Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying – Typhoon Coming On*, Turner shows a dramatic moment where a slave ship has jettisoned all portions of its “cargo” which are inadequate in order to lighten its weight to face the storm.

Turner’s canvas does not have the precise lines and details of earlier canvases. Like Constable, he knew that he was facing the challenges of photography, but Turner took the path later traveled by the Impressionists – he chose to focus on light, color, and emotion – elements which photography could not as easily capture.



Looking at Turner's canvas more closely, his style and his details are more visible.

- broad areas of light and color
- open brushstrokes
- dramatic and grotesque

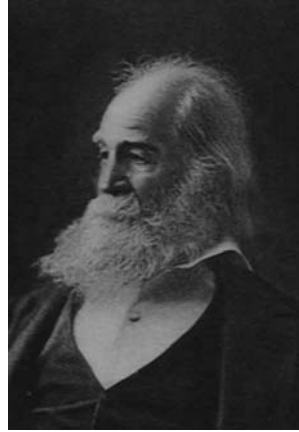
A black and white portrait of a man with a full beard and mustache, wearing a dark suit and a bow tie. The man has dark, wavy hair and is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is dark and textured.

Henry David Thoreau

Henry David Thoreau was a pacifist, tax resister, and environmentalist who isolated himself from the society of man to better commune with nature.

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Walt Whitman



Leaves of Grass

- American poet
- Focused on human connection with nature and the natural world
- Wrote about the place of the individual in an increasingly industrialized world
- Wrote about individuality and the difference the individual can make in society
- Was frequently focused on the male figure and the sense of male identity